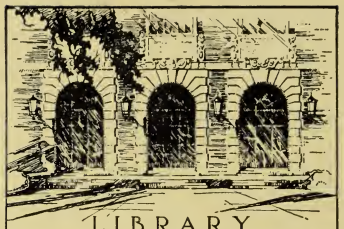
# THE MONEY-SPINNER ETC.

MERRIMAN AND TALLENTYRE



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# THE MONEY-SPINNER

## AND OTHER CHARACTER NOTES

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*'Comprendre, c'est pardonner'*

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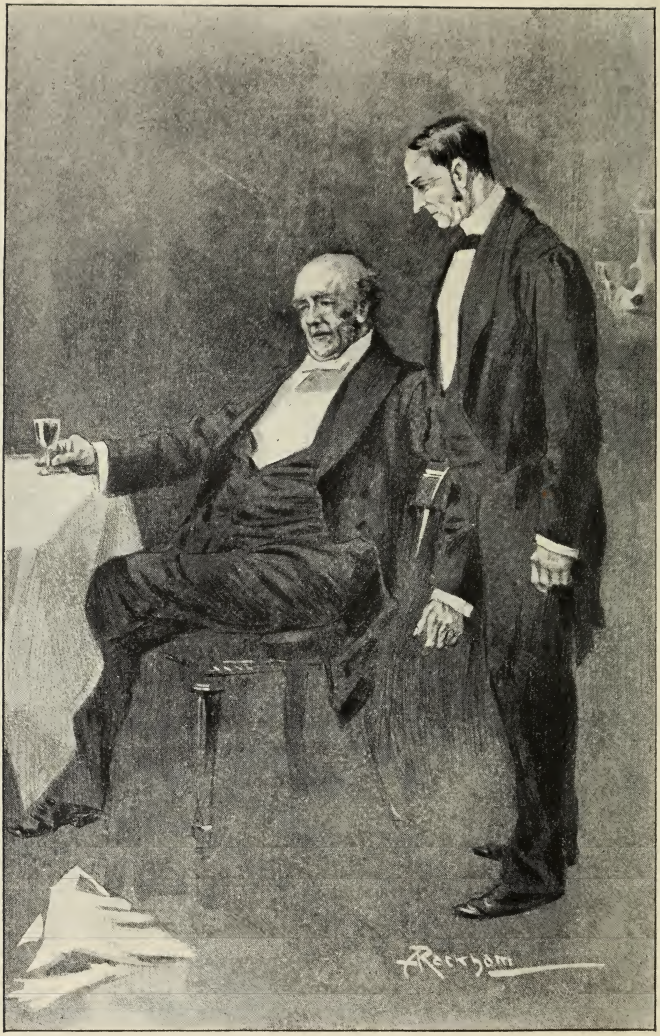

He is left sitting there in the same attitude when the others have gone

(*Page 4*)

# THE MONEY-SPINNER

*AND OTHER CHARACTER NOTES*

BY

HENRY SETON MERRIMAN
AND
S. G. TALLENTYRE

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS BY ARTHUR RACKHAM

LONDON
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# PREFACE

THANKS are due to the Proprietors of *Cornhill* for permission to reprint the majority of these Character Notes, which were published in that magazine during 1893, 1894, and 1895. Of these sketches, originally intended to be written in collaboration, a minority only are from the pen of H. S. Merriman.

H. S. M.

S. G. T.

# CONTENTS


| | PAGE |
|---|---|
| THE MONEY-SPINNER | 1 |
| THE NURSE | 13 |
| THE SCHOLAR | 20 |
| THE MOTHER | 27 |
| MY LORD | 41 |
| 'MELIA | 52 |
| THE LABOURER | 64 |
| INTELLECTA | 74 |
| THE SOLDIER-SERVANT | 85 |
| THE PRACTICAL WOMAN | 97 |
| THE SQUIRE | 108 |
| THE BEAUTY | 119 |
| THE PEASANT | 128 |
| THE FRENCHMAN | 138 |
| THE SCHOOLGIRL | 147 |
| THE DOG | 155 |
| THE CARETAKER | 165 |

PAGE

THE PARSON . . . . . 179

THE CHILD . . . . . 188

THE BAD PENNY . . . . . 201

THE SPINSTER . . . . . 214

THE NEW WOMAN . . . . . 225

THE FARMER . . . . . 233

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS


HE IS LEFT SITTING THERE IN THE SAME ATTITUDE WHEN THE OTHERS HAVE GONE . . *Frontispiece*

PERHAPS THE 'FLOS' HE HAS STUDIED MOST IS THE FLOWER-FACED LEONORA AT HIS SIDE *to face p.* 20

MY LORD IS YOUNG WITH GEORGE IV. HE LOSES A FORTUNE AT PLAY . . . . . „ 41

HE SITS VERY CONTENTEDLY IN HIS GARDEN IN THE SUMMER SUNSHINE, AND DOZES A GREAT DEAL . . . . . „ 64

SHE SITS ON JAMES'S KNEE, WHILE HE READS BULBS . . . . . „ 85

THE VILLAGERS ALWAYS FOLLOW HIS STALWART, SOLITARY OLD FIGURE, WITH THE COMMENT THAT 'HE DO BEAR UP WONDERFUL'. „ 108

THE OLD WOMAN, ROCKING POLLY'S BABY TO SLEEP. . . . . „ 128

AND MONSIEUR, LEANING ON HIS SPADE, AND LOOKING INTO HER BRIGHT FACE WITH HIS KINDLY OLD EYES, SAYS, 'YES, MADEMOISELLE,—PERHAPS' . . . . . *to face p.* 147

MARTHA WATERS THESE FORLORN AND STUNTED GERANIUMS WITH THE GREATEST PRIDE AND INDISCRETION . . . . . „ 165

BAB SAYS, 'NO, I'M NOT. I DON'T WANT TO CLIMB TREES. IT'S STUPID' . . . . „ 188

THE ELDEST GENEROSITY GIRL BOUNCES ABOUT A GOOD DEAL ON THE MUSIC STOOL, AND PLAYS WRONG NOTES MALICIOUSLY . . . „ 214

YET WHEN MARY MENTIONS HIS NAME . . . HE TURNS UPON HER FURIOUSLY . . . „ 233

# CHARACTER NOTES

## *THE MONEY-SPINNER*

'Notre humeur met le prix à tout ce qui vient de la fortune'

He lives, of course, in the most correct part of town. His sons see to such things for him. They are young men with a very just sense of the responsibility of his position, and take care that his money shall be spent in the most elegant and fashionable manner possible. Quite regardless, therefore, of the trouble thereby entailed upon them—and the expense thereby entailed upon him—they have taken care that his house shall be a delicious conglomerate of soft carpets, rare flowers, the latest thing in decorations and furniture, the best French cooks, and the most irreproachable butler. The Money-spinner would indeed be an ungrateful fiend if, after expending so much trouble upon it, the sons could not use the paternal

mansion as headquarters for their friends, and if he made any objection to his married daughter giving dances in his drawing-room, and erecting the sweetest little stage in the library for private theatricals.

But there are people who can make money and cannot appreciate it. Just as there are other people who can appreciate money but cannot make it. Of the first, the Money-spinner might almost be taken as an example. Of the second, his children are undoubtedly admirable instances. They are able to say, with a very laudable pride, that they keep the house 'warm' and give the servants 'something to do.' They are wont to add that there is nothing like a large house-party for keeping up poor old papa's spirits. The married daughter, with a taste for society, lays a very great stress upon this point. As every one says she is a devoted daughter, she certainly ought to know what is good for poor old papa's spirits.

And yet, but for her word, one would scarcely think the house-party has an enlivening effect upon him. When he creeps downstairs forlornly he is apt to encounter elegant young ladies in travelling costumes ascending his staircase, followed by immense trunks. Beyond the fact that

they are going to be his visitors, a fact which, under the circumstances, any fool could guess, he knows neither who has invited them, nor how long they propose to stay, nor even what are their names. That they are equally ignorant with regard to him is revealed to him by overhearing one of them ask another, 'Who ever is *that* old thing?' Edith (the married daughter) assures him that he is in very good society—better, she insinuates very sweetly and gracefully, than perhaps he has been used to. She cannot forget, being a person of very refined and delicate tastes, his Clapham origin. And, knowing always what is best for poor dear papa, will not allow him to forget it either.

Perhaps the society *is* good. Perhaps the Money-spinner thinks, as he looks down a tableful of guests who are very much appreciating his delicate wines and the French cooking—that it is *too* good for him. He sits at the head of the table in a rarely broken silence. The young men talk across him, after dinner, on subjects of which he knows nothing. Occasionally one or other of them thinks that the old boy seems rather out of things, and attempts to draw him into the conversation. But they soon find out he has never been at Oxford,

and is consequently impossible. They are so kind as to say that he is good enough perhaps for dollar-grinding, but a fellow, by Jove, of absolutely no cultchah whatever. So he is left to finger his wine-glass with bent hands that shake a little, and says nothing. He is left sitting there in the same attitude when the others have gone to the library to rehearse the play Edith is so very kindly getting up for a charity. He would sit there perhaps for another hour, but the butler, quite firm and polite, points out to him that if the table is not cleared the servants' supper will be delayed. He moves hastily, apologetically, and creeps up to the drawing-room. But it is bare of furniture, and druggeted for Edith's skirt-dancing party to-morrow. He had forgotten the party. He is beginning to forget many things. In the library a young lady—the Girl of the Stairs—is in a stage faint in his particular arm-chair. She wakes up when he comes in, and says, with an immensely becoming blush, directed at the eldest son, that if any one else is going to look on she really doesn't think she can go on with this utterly ridiculous scene and make such an awful idiot of herself. 'You need not mind me,' the Money-spinner murmurs in his old voice, 'for I shall not be looking at you.' Perhaps it

occurs to him afterwards that this is not what he was meant to say, that there is a plainness and directness in his form of speech which savours odiously of Clapham. One of the sons, who is always so thoughtful, accommodates poor old papa with the music-stool, the only seat of which the actors have not taken possession. He sits there looking so ridiculously depressed and old that Edith whispers at last that he is a perfect damper on them all, and if he is going to look like that he had better go to bed. Perhaps he despairs of looking anything except like that. So he goes, slowly, to bed.

The theatricals—for the charity—have a way of always taking that arm-chair, he finds. He also discovers that the whole plot of the piece rests upon one of the Oxford men finding, in the fourth act, some one's long lost Will inside the evening newspaper. Further, the Oxford man considers that this incident gives him a right to retain that newspaper and read it intermittently through the first three acts. The stage is very comfortably situated near the fire. Some woman, with an odd compassion, very much out of place, for poor old papa looking so utterly ridiculous on his music-stool, asks if he cannot sit among the performers

during rehearsals and warm himself there by the fire? But she is assured that it would be horribly unprofessional, and isn't to be thought of.

Every one in town says the skirt-dancing parties are perfectly charming and brilliantly successful. If the Money-spinner is not grateful for all the trouble Edith takes in getting them up, he certainly ought to be. It is not as if they were for *her* honour and glory. Not at all. They are given in his name, and it is therefore plainly his duty to make himself agreeable. Perhaps he tries. Perhaps it is Clapham still cleaving to him which makes him so dull, and apathetic, and heavy. Perhaps it is only because he is old and tired. Who knows? If he rouses himself to think at all, it is perhaps to reflect that his mother—dead, God knows how many years ago—would scarcely have thought, in her *bourgeoise* way, that some of the fine ladies he is entertaining were altogether respectable. Perhaps he would think—if he were allowed to think independently—that the entertainment itself is—well, a trifle vulgar. But then, as Edith told him this morning, he is so awfully Clapham. It must be because his mind is so permeated with the commonness of his native soil that he sees vulgarity even in a chaste and beauti-

ful entertainment, which is the very height of fashion.

His wife, for he has a wife, is not a creature of his common and earthy mould. She is far younger, with beauty still, an aristocratic origin, a delicate fragility, and a heart complaint which she dresses to perfection. She only lives in England a few months out of every year. The doctors say she is a perfect exotic. A sweet term, which suits her to perfection. She has a villa in Algiers, and bears up wonderfully (her physician says she has a great soul although she is so frail) at the parting from her husband which takes place every year. He is more emotional. The *bourgeois* always are. That is one of the ways by which one can tell the breed. He has not forgotten the old love he had for her years ago. He does not expect—he never expected—that she should return it. Numbers of those obliging people who go about the world telling the truth assure him that he was married for his money. He accepts the fact meekly. For what else should she, the second cousin, only a few times removed, of an Earl, have married a creature with a plebeian name, an obscure origin, and the clumsy hands and feet of the People? The Exotic tells her dearest friends—and being such an eminently

charming person, her dearest friends are quite unlimited in number—that she sacrificed herself in marriage to retrieve her papa's fortunes. Her dearest friends are quite enraptured at so rare and sweet a self-devotion, and say to each other on their way home that the Exotic is perfectly aware of the value of money, and had determined to marry the Money-spinner when she was a child in the schoolroom. Such spiteful persons (ladies, for the most part, who are probably jealous of the Exotic's fine drawing-room and her well-preserved beauty) add that it would have been better for the Money-spinner if he had married upon five hundred a year and lived ever after in a suburban villa (once the height of his ambition). Under such circumstances, the ladies add, the Exotic would not have had time for her heart complaint, and would have stayed at home like other people and looked after her husband and children. Or would have stayed at home and died. They are unable to determine which alternative would have contributed more to the Money-spinner's happiness.

He himself has an absolute devotion to his wife—and a corresponding belief in that heart complaint. He is too dull, perhaps, to form

conceptions of what might have been. Or is too shrewd, despite his apathy, to think that his wife's affection for him would have grown better in a crude villa, perpetually odoriferous of cooking, than in her dainty flower-scented rooms in Prince's Gate. He is one of those slow-going people whose feelings do not change. Even now, when her name is mentioned, his dim eyes brighten, and he rouses from the apathy into which he is falling deeper and deeper every day. She is the only subject upon which he can talk with animation. The son of his old age is vacuous, idle, and dissolute. There is but one interest in the world left clear and fresh and strong to him—and that is the wife who neglects him.

Every day, from the force of old habit, he drives to the City office in which years before he accumulated his fortune. The sons say it is perfectly ridiculous. Edith is not quite sure that it is not—well, a little common. But sometimes, when they want an extra cheque, they will consent, so beautiful is their humility and condescension, to drive to the office and ask him for it personally. The sons wonder what the deuce he does there all day. They themselves know nothing about making money—only spending it. And that they do to

perfection. Edith says he grubs about the old Stocks and Shares, and she verily believes is quite fond of them. Perhaps he is. They have for him the attraction of old association. As he sits in the very elderly leather chair, which neither persuasion nor sarcasm can induce him to exchange for a better, it is possible that he recalls his youth. He recollects the old poverty, the bitter struggle, the keen ambition. He remembers the fierce incentive he had to work—the success coming slowly, slowly —and then bursting upon him like a great dawn. But Edith has come up—for a little money, she says. Only people's ideas of what constitutes a *little* money differ very considerably. 'My *dear* papa,' she exclaims, with a tap on his shoulder, 'you have been dozing. And if you only knew how you have been snoring I verily believe you would never go to sleep again.'

One morning the valet comes to Edith with a scared face. 'My master,' says the man, 'is ill; and I think a doctor should be sent for at once.'

'Parker always loses his head in illness,' says Edith when the man has gone. 'Poor dear papa! I shall go up and see him, and then I can judge for myself. But I must say I hope to goodness he won't want the doctor; for who can be spared to

fetch him this morning, with the dance coming off to-night and everything—*I* don't know.'

The sons do not know either. Nor the guests. No one knows. And so every one continues breakfast with an assumption of cheerfulness, which is so very admirably done that it might almost be taken for the real thing. Edith sees papa, and does not think he is nearly so bad as Parker makes him out. He seems apathetic and heavy, and says very little. But that is all. (Edith has once been engaged to a physician, so she thinks she ought to know something of medicine.) Still, perhaps they will go round by the doctor's, and ask him to call, during their morning drive. It is hundreds and thousands of miles out of their way, but it will never do to let poor old papa feel himself neglected. So after a little shopping at Shoolbred's, ices at Buzzard's, and a détour by way of Marshall & Snelgrove's, they call on the doctor. He has just gone out, so there is a short unavoidable delay in his coming. But that does not matter, because the Money-spinner has died some hours before. Parker has been with him, and has bent over him with a polite affection not born entirely, perhaps, of handsome wages and unlimited perquisites. His master says very little. He has been in the habit

of saying very little all his life. He asks that a photograph of his wife—a dressy photograph in a theatrical pose—may be turned so that he can see it from where he lies. Once or twice he murmurs her name. His intellect is quite clear. He does not ask to see her, but appears to recollect perfectly that she is far away from him, as she has been for more than half their married life. Once he asks for his youngest son, speaking of him by some baby name which has long since dropped into disuse. Parker explains to his master that Mr. Harold does not know his father is so ill, and has gone out riding. After that the Money-spinner never speaks again. The monotonous ticking of the clock is the only sound that breaks the silence. The old man's withered hands move restlessly on the bedclothes. He turns his head once, slowly, on his pillow, and so dies—the most desolate of God's creatures.

The evening party has to be put off, and Edith goes into very stylish mourning. The vacuous son consoles himself by marrying a barmaid. It is whispered that the Exotic will not long remain a widow, and Parker has found a situation in a titled family.

## *THE NURSE*

'Il y a de méchantes qualités qui font de grands talents'

Peg has an excellent situation. Her mistress has often said so herself. And *she* ought to know. 'Eighteen pounds a year and All Found is a great deal more, George, than most people give their nurses. And there isn't any one else who would put up with what I do from Margaret.'

There is no doubt at all that Peg has a passionate temper, and, at times, it is to be feared, a coarse tongue. She is short, sturdy, and eminently plebeian, with little, quick, black, flashing eyes. She is ignorant. The culture and polish of the Board School are not upon her. But when Nellie, her eldest charge, dares to doubt the statements Peg has made to Jack, *à propos* of the story of Alfred and the cakes, Peg chases Nellie round the table and boxes her ears. It will thus be seen that Peg is no fool.

Jacky is her especial care. Jacky is a gay soul

of four. To say that Peg is proud of him would be but a miserable half-truth. She flings, as it were, Jacky's charms of mind and person in the face of the Abigails of less favoured infants. She steadily exhibits every day, during a constitutional walk, Jack's sturdy limbs and premature conversation to nurses whose charges have vastly inferior limbs and no conversation at all. It is unnecessary to add that Peg is exceedingly unpopular.

Jack is being ruinously spoilt. Mamma says so. Mamma, however, is not a person of strong character, and Peg is of very strong character. So Mamma cannot possibly help the spoiling. Peg indeed makes Jack obey *her*, but does not particularly impress on him to obey any one else. She has been known, on rare occasions, to administer correction to him with a hand which is not of the lightest. But when Mamma punishes him Peg appears in the drawing-room trembling and white with rage to announce that she will not stay to see the child ill-used. 'This day month, if you please,' and a torrent of abuse.

Of course it is not this day month. Mamma says, 'I told you she would come round, George. Margaret is perfectly wide-awake, I assure you, and knows a good place when she has it.'

So Peg keeps the good place—and Jack.

One summer she takes him down to a country manor to stay with his cousins. Before the end of the first week she has quarrelled with all the manor servants—especially the nurses. When Jacky, with a gay smile and guileless mien, puts out the eyes of cousin Mabel's doll, and Mabel weeps thereat, Peg is seen smacking that infant in a corner. This is too much for the manor. And it is certain if Jacky had not most inconveniently fallen ill the manor spare bedroom would have been wanted for other occupants, and Peg and Jacky would have returned home three weeks too soon.

There is not much the matter with Jacky. Only a croupy cold. And Peg knows all about these croupy colds. She tries upon it many terrible and ignorant remedies. Will not hear of the doctor being sent for, and one night suddenly sends for him herself. And the doctor sends for Jacky's parents. Peg is at the doorway to meet Mamma—hysterically reproachful from the cab window. Peg is quite white, with an odd glitter in her little eyes, and does not lose her temper. Before Mamma has been revived by sherry in the dining-room Peg is back again with the boy. She

has scarcely left him for a week. He has already lost his pretty plumpness and roundness—a mere shadow of a child even now, with nothing left of his old self except a capacity for laughing—what a weak laugh!—and an odd sense of humour in grim satire to his wasted body and the grave faces round him. Only Peg laughs back at him; Mamma wonders how she can have the heart. But then, of course, one cannot expect a servant to feel what one does one's self. It may be because Peg is, after all, merely hired (eighteen pounds a year and All Found), and is no sort of relation to Jack, that she can hold him in her arms, talk to him, sing to him by the hour together; that she can do with little rest and hurried meals; that she is always alert, sturdy, and competent.

Mamma thinks it is a blessed thing that the lower classes are not sensitive like we are. It *is* a very blessed thing—for Jack.

Papa is worn out with grief and anxiety before the colour has left Peg's homely face.

Mamma is incompetent and hysterical from the first, and is soon forbidden the sick-room altogether.

It is melancholy to record that when this mandate is issued a gleam of satisfaction—not to

say triumph—steals over Peg's resolute countenance.

'He's getting on nicely, doctor, now, isn't he?' she inquires of the bigwig from Harley Street a day or two later. 'He' is Jack, of course. The large and pompous physician looks down at her through his gold-rimmed eye-glasses, and gives her to understand, not ungently—for though she is only the nurse, he thinks she has some real affection for the child—that Jack is dying.

'Dying!' Peg flashes out full of defiance. 'Then what's the use of your chattering and worriting and upsetting the place like this, if that's all you can do for him? Dying! We'll see about that.'

From that moment she defies them all. The consulting physicians, the ordinary practitioner, the night-nurse from Guy's, Death itself, perhaps. She never leaves the child. The shadow of the old Jacky lies all day long on a pillow in her lap; sometimes all night too. When it is past saying anything else it says her name. It has its head so turned that it can see her face. When she smiles down at it, the forlornest ghost of a smile answers her back. She has an influence over it that would be magical if it were not most natural

that devotion should be repaid by devotion, even from the heart of a child.

The consulting physician says one day that if there is a hope for the boy that hope lies in Peg's nursing. It is the first time he has admitted that there can be a hope at all. Peg's face shines with an odd light which, if she were not wholly plain and plebeian, would make her beautiful.

One day, when the shadow is lying in her lap as usual, the night-nurse puts a telegram into her hand. When she has read it she lays Jacky on the bed and goes away. For the first time she does not heed his feeble cry of her name.

She finds the father and mother, and, with the pink paper shaking in her hand, says that her brother is dying; that she must go away. Blood is thicker than water after all. She has but a few passions, but those few are strong; and the dying brother is one of them.

The father, broken down by the wretchedness of the past weeks, implores her to stay and save Jacky. But she is unmoved. Her brother is dying, and she must go.

The mother, abjectly miserable, entreats and prays, and offers her money, and Peg turns upon her with a flash of scorn far too grand for her stout and homely person.

And when she goes back to Jacky a wan ghost of a smile breaks through the tears on his face, and he lifts a wizened hand to stroke her cheek, and says that it was bad to go away, and she is not to go away any more.

And she does not.

Jacky gets better. It is as if Peg has fought with Death—as she would fight for Jacky with anything in this world or in any other world—and conquered. Jacky's case appears in the 'Lancet,' and the medical bigwigs shake their heads over it and are fairly puzzled. They have not the cue to the whole matter—which is Peg.

When Jacky is past a woman's care Peg goes away. Papa and mamma don't spare expense, and give her a five-pound note as a parting present.

But she has another reward, wholly unsubstantial and satisfactory. In an undergraduate's rooms at Christ Church—an idle dog of an undergraduate, by the way—amid a galaxy of dramatic beauty, and in a terrible plush frame, presented by herself, there is a photo—of Peg.

And it is believed that the undergraduate, who is not in any other way remarkable for domestic virtue, actually writes to her.

## *THE SCHOLAR*

'Qui vit sans folie n'est pas si sage qu'il croit'

He is fifty-five years old. He is erudite, classic, and scholarly. He knows everything. What can be duller than a man who knows everything? He is scientific and botanical. He wears grey thread gloves—a size too large—goloshes and a comforter. And yet, when his cousin presents him with a living—a remote living in the wilds of a northern county—he purposes to be married.

This Fossil, with traces of an ice age clearly left on his formal manners and punctilious and guarded speech, engages himself to Leonora.

Leonora is romantic, as her name declares. But Leonora's guardian is eminently practical. Thinks the living will do. And so Leonora is betrothed to it.

Leonora is sweet and twenty. With brown curls tied at the back of her head with a ribbon. With an arch smile. With a charming gift of

Perhaps the 'flos' he has studied most is the flower-faced Leonora at his side

singing—to the harp. *She* is not erudite. It is not the fashion for young ladies to be erudite in her time. When her elderly lover shows her specimens through a microscope—which is his ridiculous old way of expressing admiration for her—she is never able to decide whether she is looking at a flower or a beetle. She is wholly volatile and lovely and inattentive. All his love-making is full of instruction. It is an absurd, pedantic way of showing one's affection. But it is almost the only way he has. And there are worse, perhaps.

They go for their honeymoon to the Riviera. And the Riviera of forty years ago had much more of heaven and less of earth about it than the Riviera of the present day.

Beneath the deep eternal blue and the everlasting sunshine of its skies the Fossil's punctilious formality melts a little. He still goes about in a comforter and searches for specimens through near-sighted spectacles. But under the balmy warmth of an Italian sun—and of Leonora—his chilliness of manner experiences a slight thaw. It is thought that for those few brief weeks he is, in some very slight degree of course, as another man might be. It is certain that his botanical friends

are considerably disappointed in the collection of Italian flora he has to show them on his return home. Perhaps the *flos* he has studied most is the flowered-faced Leonora at his side—Leonora with her poke-bonnet hung upon her arm, with her curls shaken back, and her wicked, laughing, roguish face turned up to his—looking for all the world like one of those ridiculous pictures in an old-fashioned Book of Beauty.

Leonora hates science—and stops the scientist's prosy mouth with a kiss. Leonora can't bear botany, and likes the flowers much better without those interminable Latin names tacked on to them.

Is she in love with her Fossil? Who shall say? It is preposterous and unnatural that she should be. But the preposterous and unnatural both happen occasionally.

Is her Fossil in love with her? A hideous old fright in goloshes, a tedious, moth-eaten old book-worm has no right to be in love with anyone.

Then they go home to the country vicarage. The country vicarage is the incarnation of dulness, dampness, and ugliness. And Leonora sings about the house and scandalises the servants. The furniture is immensely solid and frightful. And

Leonora's shawl is thrown here, and her work—in dreadful disorder—there, and roses from the garden everywhere.

The Fossil, before he was married, had drawn up a solemn code of rules for the guidance of the household. A bell to tell them to get up; a bell to tell them to come down; a bell for prayers; a bell to begin breakfast, and a bell to finish it. And Leonora stops her ears when she hears these warnings, and is never less than ten minutes late for meals.

The Fossil sits in his study, scientific and theological, and Leonora breaks in upon this sanctum, without tapping, with her face glowing and laughing, and shuts up the abstruse work with a bang. She drags the Fossil into the garden without his goloshes. When she wants to do something incompatible with his Calvinistic principles she lays her fresh face against his parchment cheek and says it isn't any good saying 'No,' because she really Must. And she always does.

The Fossil had a great scientific work in hand when he was married—an elaborate treatise upon the Paleozoic Epoch—but it proceeds lamentably slowly. He attempts to write in the evening after dinner, and Leonora draws out the harp from its

corner and sings to it. She sings 'Rose Softly Blooming' and ''Twas One of Those Dreams,' and the great work does not proceed at all.

Then Leonora is ill, and the little daughter is dead before she is born. But Leonora is soon better—well enough to lie on the sofa and be sweet, foolish, and tiresome once more. The Fossil sits by her side gravely. Sometimes he brings her flowers without their botanical names. He proses scientifically, as from long habit; but he looks the while at her transparent colour and her shining eyes, and the science is at times unscholarly and even incorrect. And Leonora looks back at him with the old arch, laughing glance, and with something more behind it. It is a something they do not say—which can never be said. Perhaps the one thinks that the other does not know it. It may be so. To the last Leonora is very much better—'Nearly quite well,' in answer to a daily question. On the last evening the Fossil is proposing a change to the seaside to complete her cure, and she dies with a smile and a jest, infinitely tender and selfless, upon her lips.

The neighbourhood, who could not be expected to like an 'eccentric old thing' like the Fossil, decides that he is shockingly heartless. He appears

at Leonora's funeral actually in a red comforter. There are no signs of emotion upon his face. The lines may be a trifle deeper upon it, perhaps; but then he was always deeply lined, so that does not count.

He completes the great work; he draws up a new and more ridiculous code of rules for his household; and then he marries again. His wife is perfectly virtuous and meaningless. She obeys the bells to a second; she never interrupts his studies; she never lets the children disturb him; his comforter and gloves are never out of their places. She is an excellent wife—a great deal too good for him.

He grows duller and more erudite yearly. A visitor describes him as a Lump of Science. He composes immensely learned and dreary sermons. The six yokels who usually form his congregation very sensibly go to sleep. The chill formality of his manner repulses the parishioners and frightens his children. He attempts to teach these children out of his fusty stores of scientific lore, but they are too awe-struck to comprehend anything—supposing that they had the ability, which they have not.

Their mother dies; they grow up and go out

into the world. As far as the Fossil is concerned, they are virtually dead also; but then, as far as he is concerned, they might almost as well never have been alive.

He is not more lonely than he has been for twenty years. He passes all day in his study among his books. That the room is damp and dreary, matters little to him. The books are behind the time. He is behind the time himself. Between him and the musty work over which his old head bends, comes sometimes a vision of the days that once were and will be no more. The Italian sunshine above, the touch of a hand, the sound of a laughing voice, a girl's face, brilliant and tender, and he sees—Leonora.

## *THE MOTHER*

'L'être le plus aimé est celui par qui on aura le plus souffert'

Mrs. Tasker lets lodgings. She lives in the most remote and unknown of east coast watering places. Her modest abode is not patronised by the fashionable. She does not even pretend—there is, in fact, no pretence about Mrs. Tasker—that her sitting-room has a sea view. Neither does she deceive the impecunious hospital-nurse, the soft spinster, and the struggling lady artist, who form her *clientèle*, with promises of good cooking or any description of attendance.

Mrs. Tasker, in fact, lets lodgings, as it were, upon sufferance. She receives her guests with a cast of countenance perfectly lugubrious. She has paid no attention to her dress so as to create an agreeable impression upon them. Her normal costume of a dingy skirt, a forlorn top of a different colour, and a depressing apron is unchanged. She is on the alert to tell them at the moment of their

arrival all the drawbacks they will find to herself, her rooms, her kitchen-range, and the place in general. 'Your neighbourhood is lovely, I am told,' says the lady artist with the sweetest and most propitiating of smiles.

'I've never seed as it was,' answers Mrs. Tasker gloomily. She hates the lady artist. She regards all lodgers, indeed, with a perfectly consistent animosity. Her disdain for a class of persons who require frequent incidental cups of tea, hot dinners every day, and dessert on Sundays is quite without bounds. Her sentiments towards her guests are written large upon a perfectly plain and trustworthy countenance. When she sees them sitting with their feet upon her cherished Berlin wool-worked arm-chair she bangs their door as she leaves the room with a display of feeling which nearly brings the house about their ears. When one of them ventures to ask if her landlady has such a thing as a pair of nutcrackers, the satiric scorn on Mrs. Tasker's countenance for a woman in the prime of life who cannot crack nuts with her teeth causes the guest to blush, and apologise for making so unreasonable a demand.

Mrs. Tasker has, moreover, a habit of thrusting the dinner things on a tray on to the table in front

of the visitor with an expression which says more plainly than words, 'If you can't arrange them for yourself you must be a fool.'

She never panders to the Sybarite inclinations of her lodgers by bringing them hot water in the morning. When they order for dinner a little kickshaw like a mutton-chop she says, with an unmistakable note of triumph in her voice, 'Our butcher's run out of all but pork.'

She always prophesies a continuance of wet weather.

'When it do begin to rain here,' she says, 'it takes precious good care not to stop.'

But in spite of a disposition so wholly honest and discouraging, Mrs. Tasker's lodgers have a habit of coming back to her. Mrs. Tasker is indefatigably clean. She scrubs and polishes until she is purple in the face. She would scorn the idea of purloining a single tartlet belonging to the parlour. She has that vigorous honesty which is often found in company with a bad temper and a good heart.

In the back kitchen live Mr. Tasker and little Johnnie. Mr. Tasker is thick, agricultural, well-meaning, and beery. Mr. Tasker is not of much account, and Johnnie is the apple of Mrs. Tasker's eye. It is for Johnnie she lets lodgings. She and

her husband could live well enough—by cutting Tasker off his beer—upon the wages of a day-labourer. But Johnnie wants warm underclothing and a doctor when he is ill, and presently a first-rate schooling. Johnnie must have nourishing food—or what Mrs. Tasker takes to be nourishing food. For his sake, therefore, the mother lets lodgings. For his sake she bears with persons who are always wanting meals and ringing the bell. For his sake she controls—in a measure, at least—a temper as rough as her homely face. For his sake she gets up very early in the morning, and creeps upstairs to bed, with a sigh she cannot wholly stifle, very late at night. For his sake she gives up what she calls her independence, and which, after Johnnie—a very long way after, indeed—she likes better than anything she has. For Johnnie's sake she does not turn the lady artist summarily out of doors when that enthusiast ruins the parlour table-cloth with her oil paints. For the sake of a little snivelling boy, with a perpetual cold in his head and no pocket-handkerchief, she stints herself and Mr. Tasker in food and clothing and comforts. She performs, indeed, for him a thousand sacrifices, of which no one knows, perhaps, the extent or the difficulty. She is, a

hundred times a day, comparatively polite where her natural disposition inclines her to be superlatively rude. She holds her tongue—at a great cost. She is silently scornful where she wants to be abusive. And she always manages, for Johnnie's sake, to say on parting with her lodgers that she hopes they will return to her next year.

In Mrs. Tasker's love towards the child there is none of that weakness and softness which distinguish some maternities. Her love, in fact, rarely rises to her lips. It is hidden away in a heart wholly strong, honest, and faithful. The utmost demonstration of affection which she permits herself towards her boy is to occasionally rub his damp little nose vigorously with the corner of her apron, leaving the nose astonishingly red and flat. Mrs. Tasker 'don't hold' with spoiling children.

'It's a poor way of caring for 'em,' she says. And so when little Johnnie is naughty she whips him very severely, and when he is good she cuffs him occasionally, just to remind him that the maternal love and wisdom are always watching over him.

At present, and in default of better, Johnnie goes to the village school. Mrs. Tasker neatly describes

the schoolmaster as a 'flat.' But would there be any master good enough to teach Johnnie? Perhaps not. He is sent off to school while the lodgers are taking their breakfasts. Mrs. Tasker ties him up tightly in a very hygienic and scratchy comforter which she has made with great pains in her rare spare minutes. He is further clad in a thick coat, studded with naval buttons, which Mrs. Tasker bought in place of a jacket for herself.

Mrs. Tasker accompanies him to the gate. She watches him out of sight, and shakes her fist at him when he looks round, by way, as it were, of keeping him up to his duties. It is only when he is quite out of sight that something like a smile and tenderness come on her harsh face, and she goes slowly back to the house.

'You think a sight on Johnnie, I suppose,' says Mr. Tasker gloomily one day, in a thick voice suggestive of agricultural mud.

'A sight more than I do on you,' answers Mrs. Tasker snappily, washing dishes.

Mrs. Tasker has a feeling which she does not explain, or try to explain, about her love for the child. It appears to her to be something sacred and secret; that one does not want to talk about; that one resents being reminded of; of which the

roots are too deep down in one's heart to bear being dug up and looked at.

She is not, indeed, always actually thinking of him. She has a thousand things to occupy her attention—the lodgers' meals and the parlour table-cloth, and Mr. Tasker's tendency to inebriate himself. But the child stands by, as it were—always very close to her heart.

Everything she does is directly or indirectly for Johnnie. She eyes the clothing of other little boys with a view to copying it for Johnnie. She has quite violent dislikes towards children of Johnnie's age who are fatter and healthier than he is. There are, indeed, many such. But perhaps the maternal affection is only the stronger because Johnnie is puny, weakly, and plain—maternal affection having been so constituted by Nature—or God.

One winter, a winter when Mrs. Tasker's rooms are occupied by a soft-spoken Spinster who has generously sacrificed her youth to a slum, Johnnie is very puny and weakly indeed. The Spinster, who takes an uncommon interest in Johnnie, recommends cod-liver oil. Mr. Tasker, the mother having already denied herself everything except the bare necessaries of life, is cut off his beer-money to provide it. And the Spinster thinks this is a very

cold place for your dear little boy, and I am just starting a school at Torquay, and won't you trust him to me? And the Spinster kisses Johnnie with great self-sacrifice on the tip of his red and humid little nose. Mrs. Tasker, into whose face a deep colour has come, says in an unusual voice, 'I'll think on it, mum.' That evening, when Johnnie has gone to bed, Mr. Tasker spells out the advertisement of the school from a paper the Spinster has lent him.

Mrs. Tasker sits with a hand on each knee, looking very deeply and fixedly into the fire.

''Ome comfits?' she says doubtfully. 'And what do she mean by 'ome comfits? Will they see as 'is shirt is aired and 'e don't sit in wet boots?'

'Un-lim-i-ted di-et,' continues the father with difficulty.

'If that means letting 'im stuff 'isself, it'll kill that child,' says Mrs. Tasker, pessimistically.

'What are you a-cryin' for?' inquires her husband. Mrs. Tasker replies with considerable snappishness that she is not crying, and men is all fools, drat them, with other remarks so uncomplimentary to the sex that Mr. Tasker prudently lies low behind the newspaper until the storm is over.

The Spinster's blandishments and her advertise-

ment prevail. Johnnie goes back with her to Torquay. She is paid her fees in advance, from money slowly and hardly saved for the purpose, and mysteriously hidden away in Mrs. Tasker's bedroom. The mother is very courageous before this parting, and, it must be confessed, towards Mr. Tasker particularly uncertain in temper. She initiates the Spinster into the mysteries of Johnnie's underclothing. She buys him six pocket-handkerchiefs, and instructs him how to use them without assistance. She is up very early making his preparations, and goes to bed later than ever at night. She does not spare herself at all. She is glad, perhaps, that she has no time to think. Her hard life at this period ages her very considerably. Or she is aged, perhaps, through some feelings and forebodings of which she never speaks. She is always very cheerful and practical and severe with Johnnie, who is as melancholy at this time as one can be at six years old. 'It's for your good,' she says, shaking him to emphasise her remarks. 'And you ought to know as how it is.' Then the end comes. Johnnie's sad little face is sticky with tears and toffee, which has been administered to him as a consolation, when he puts it up to be kissed. 'Mind you're a good boy,' says the mother

unsteadily, and with a grip on his little arm which he understands to mean love, perhaps, better than if it were a delicate caress.

'He is going to be a dear, happy little fellow,' says the Spinster sweetly, and the cab drives away. Two tears—large, heavy, unaccustomed tears—fall down Mrs. Tasker's homely face as she watches it. And then she turns indoors, addressing herself by opprobrious names for her weakness, and cleans out the late lodger's apartments viciously.

Six months later Mrs. Tasker receives an anonymous letter. It is very illiterate and misspelt. But it is so far comprehensible that when the mother has read it her head falls upon her folded arms on the table with a great and exceeding bitter cry. Your son, says the letter—spelling the word as if Johnnie were the chief of heavenly bodies—'is being treated that bad as if you don't come and take him away will be the death on him. She is a Beast. She has done the same by others. Only Johnnie is delicater, and it's killing him.'

It's killing him. The fierce maternal heart beating in Mrs. Tasker's gaunt person makes her tremble in a great passion of rage, love, and yearning. Come and take him away. It sounds so easy, and is impossible. Tasker is out of work—has been

out of work for six weeks. The lodgers represent the only source of income. There may be, perhaps, five shillings in the house. But there certainly is not enough for a journey across England. If there were how could Mrs. Tasker leave the house? And what would be the use of sending a lout like Mr. Tasker (men is all fools), who has never been twenty miles from his native village in his life, a complicated cross-railway journey?

So Mrs. Tasker takes the family pen and adds a little water to the remains of the family ink, and writes to the Spinster demanding Johnnie's return. The mother has never held much with book learning. Does not know very well how to write, or at all how to express herself. 'You can keep the money,' she says. 'We don't want that. Send the boy back, or we will have the law of you. Send Johnnie back sharp, and curse you, curse you, curse you!'

The curses, which she spells 'cus,' are in some sort a relief to this poor, ignorant, angry, loving soul. The coarse vigour of her ill-spelt abuse comforts her for the moment a little. It is when the letter is sealed, stamped, and posted that her maternal tragedy begins. It is in those terrible days of waiting, when no answer is returned to the

letter and Johnnie does not come home, that she lives through the worst hours of her life.

A most merciful necessity requires that she shall work as usual, that she shall cook the lodgers' food and clean their rooms, that she shall be perpetually busy from morning until evening. But is there any work that can make her forget Johnnie? It seems to her that his poor, pinched, white little face haunts her. That it comes always between her and what she is doing. She does not say much. What is there to be said? Mr. Tasker smokes a short clay pipe in front of the fire in stolid gloominess. He does not suggest comfort. Suggestions are not his *forte*. He is, in a dull manner, shocked when Mrs. Tasker, for the first time in her life that he can remember, refuses to eat. She pushes away the plate of untouched food and sits for a minute or two with her elbows on the table and her head resting on her hands.

'Don't give in, 'Liza, don't give in,' says Mr. Tasker almost piteously.

'It don't matter,' says Mrs. Tasker. 'I can make up at tea.'

But she does not make up at tea. Who shall say, in these interminable days, what terrible, foolish, impossible imaginings creep into her heart? She

fancies a thousand ignorant and unlikely things which may be happening to the child.

'He was always weakly,' she says. 'It will kill him.' She has, indeed, hitherto angrily repudiated suggestions that Johnnie is less strong than other children. They recur to her now, and she cannot disbelieve them.

'He were a pore baby, weren't he?' she says huskily to her husband, and hoping for a contradiction.

'He were, 'Liza, he were,' answers Mr. Tasker, gloomily.

She remembers, how well! that frail little infancy. She used to compare him with other babies, and insult their mammas dreadfully by vaunting Johnnie's superiority in her rudest and bluntest manner.

'But his legs were pore little sticks,' she murmurs to herself sorrowfully. 'And I knowed they were all along.'

And one night, when she and her husband have been sitting silently on either side of the hearth watching the embers blacken and die out, her rough, listless hands fall at her sides, and she cries out in despair, and as if she were alone—

'Oh Lord, don't be for hurting our Johnnie any more! We'd sooner he died outright.'

And the next day Johnnie comes. The balmy air of Torquay has not been sufficient to counteract the baneful effects of insufficient food and genteel cruelty. Johnnie is very ill indeed.

'Will he live?' says the mother.

'God help you!' answers the doctor, looking into her strong, homely, haggard face. 'Nothing human can save him.'

But to this faithless and unbelieving generation there remains one great miracle-worker, whose name is Love.

My Lord is young with George IV. He loses a fortune at play

## *MY LORD*

'Chacun aime comme il est'

My Lord is young with George IV. He loses a fortune at play, and another, amassed by a pious aunt in the country, at all sorts of devilries. He has thrashed the watch and staked an estate on the cards in an evening. He records many years after how he enters the ring with the Regent, and how the First Gentleman in Europe, with an exquisite ease and urbanity, confesses himself beaten.

My Lord is on the turf, where he wins and flings away a fortune with a mad generosity: where he loses, and does not retrench. He is dressed with the carelessness that is a part of his nature, and with a richness that becomes the Court of the Regent.

My Lord can sing a song with the best over his wine, and take his two bottles—like a gentleman. His speech is garnished, even in very old age,

with those flowers of expression which were in universal vogue in his youth. He recalls, forty years later, a hundred stories of that mad career of pleasure. He remembers with a curious accuracy a thousand details respecting his companions and the manners and habits of that wild day. He knows, and retails with perfect wit and point, a thousand stories of the Court which have never crept into print. His reminiscences are as interesting as a book of scandalous memoirs.

My Lord, indeed, has pretty well beggared himself before he is thirty. He marries money. And money in the person of a shrewish wife is false to his honour and her own. His daughter, who belongs to her mother's faction, marries abroad, and is lost to him for ever. His son, from whom he has hoped everything, is not only wild—which indeed My Lord should be one to forgive easily—but brings dishonour on a great name and dies miserably.

My Lord is not yet sixty years old when he retires to Hamblin, the estate in the country which his extravagances have left heavily mortgaged, and his neglect has left out of repair. A number of evil stories, gathering astonishingly in volume and flavour at every stage of the journey, have fol-

lowed him from town. Virtue points out with her positive finger that this old age of poverty, solitude, and disappointment is but the just and natural harvest of that astonishing crop of wild oats sown in that wild youth. When My Lord, therefore, appears in the village with his lean figure stooping a little, and his narrow eyes extraordinarily bright and keen, he excites that exceeding interest and curiosity which it is believed are never roused by anything less entertaining than a reputation for iniquity. Some persons are quite shocked to see him in church on Sunday. There is a terrible story current of him for a little while, to the effect that he does not know the position of the Psalms in the Liturgy. But he soon mends this error, and lives a life of so much retirement, simplicity, and apparently virtue, as to become wholly uninteresting to everybody.

After a time My Lord takes unto himself a domestic Chaplain, who lives with him the greater part of the year. The Chaplain is round-faced, benevolent, and kindly, with a full chin above his white tie, bespeaking a hundred pleasant human virtues. The Chaplain enjoys port wine in the most honest moderation—is in no sense an ascetic—has a heart full of charity and good-will

for all men—a kindly sense of humour, and a very true and self-respecting affection for My Lord his patron.

'I don't come to church to hear your sermons, Ruther, you know,' says My Lord, 'which are damned long and prosy—you know they are. I come to look at your wife listening to them.'

The Chaplain's wife, whom he calls Miriam, is very sweet and simple and delicate. Miriam has brown curls shading a clear forehead, a brown silk frock revealing sloping Early Victorian shoulders, and the most tender, candid eyes in all the world. Miriam is of gentler birth than her husband, whom she loves and reveres as at once the cleverest, dearest, and best of created beings.

My Lord has not often met the Miriam type of woman. Perhaps never before. At first he does not understand her. He looks at her across the dinner table with his unsteady hand playing with his glass and a sort of perplexity in his shrewd old eyes. 'So damned innocent,' he says to himself. 'So damned innocent.' Perhaps damned innocence has not been the leading characteristic of the lady acquaintances of his youth. He wonders at it a little at least—in Miriam—as if it were some new thing.

His wonder, indeed, gives place very soon to another feeling. He has at last for this woman the purest and tenderest affection he has ever known.

'I have the devil of a reputation, Ruther,' says My Lord, grimly. 'Don't you do me the honour to be jealous of me?'

'No, my Lord,' says the Chaplain, looking at his patron.

And indeed My Lord has for Miriam such a feeling as, in a happier circumstance, he might have felt for a child of his own.

There are a thousand ways in which Miriam appeals to My Lord's ancient sense of humour. He likes to hear her say 'Hush!' in her shocked, gentle voice, when from immemorial habit he ornaments his speech with an oath. He has not the less a most tender respect for her purity. When she asks questions, in her damned innocence, about his youth, he bowdlerizes his old stories to an extent that the Chaplain does not even recognise them.

'I lie horribly,' says My Lord when Miriam has left the two to their wine. 'Past absolution, eh, Ruther?'

But the Chaplain, who may very possibly be right, thinks not.

Miriam's most staunch and simple belief in My Lord's goodness amuses him vastly at first. Another feeling mingles with his amusement after a while as he looks into her clear eyes.

'We were a cursed bad lot in those days,' he says. 'If you knew how bad you wouldn't have anything to say to me.'

But Miriam says, 'Yes, I should,' and nods her head so that the brown Victorian curls shake a little, and puts her gentle hand for a moment into My Lord's wizened old fingers.

For the first time in his life the wildness of his youth rests a little uneasily upon that accommodating organ which is called My Lord's conscience.

'Gad!' he says, with that light cynicism of manner which may or may not hide a deeper feeling. 'I feel almost like a convert. No thanks to your prosy old preachings, Ruther. Don't flatter yourself.'

And indeed the Chaplain, who is the most humble and simple of men, does not do so at all.

In the summer mornings it is Miriam's habit to play with her children on the great sloping lawns before the house. My Lord watches her

more often than he knows perhaps from the open windows of his library.

She comes in to see him sometimes, and looks up with a soft wistfulness in her pretty eyes at the great books on their shelves.

'I wish I could read some of these,' she says, taking down a French work and holding it up to him.

'God forbid!' says My Lord piously.

But indeed Miriam's French is neither of a quantity nor quality to do her any harm.

She goes back to the children presently. My Lord sits long with the book, which he does not read, before him. He has aged rapidly lately. He feels sometimes very old indeed. The hand, with the ruffles of a long-past fashion hanging over it, is very lean and unsteady. He puts down at first to approaching senility a certain odd sensation of something that might almost be shame for that wild past that comes to him with Miriam. He ascribes to a weakened intelligence a sort of emotion he knows when Miriam plays Handel and Haydn in the half lights at the harpsichord. Sometimes on Sunday evenings, after dinner, and before the darkness has come, she draws out the harp from its corner and sings to it

in the sweetest voice in the world. She sings to it the old religious music which is of no fashion, but for all time. Her white frock and the fair piety of her bent face make one of her hearers at least think, as it is probable he has not often thought before, of the angels.

He sits, as he has told the Chaplain, during the prosy discourses on Sunday and looks at her tender rapt face and her quiet folded hands. She brings the children to him sometimes. One night he catches sight of her in the room set apart as a nursery bending over one of them in its cot, with a face all beautiful, human, and maternal, and her lips moving in a prayer.

His seared old heart is touched at this time by a thousand emotions which it has never known, or to which it has long been dead. He is less cynical —to Miriam. The stories of his wild youth have lost some of their attraction for him, and he relates them, even to the Chaplain, very seldom.

Is it a conversion, as he has suggested with a sneer? God knows. Is a conversion possible at threescore years and ten, with a character formed by immemorial habit and marked with the impression of a life? God knows also.

One day My Lord is taken ill. It is a long

illness, to which there can be no end but one. He lies in the great state bedroom, in the great state bed which has sheltered three sovereigns. If he be changed in heart, as is surmised, he is scarcely changed in manner at all. The simplicity of Miriam, his gentle nurse, at once amuses and touches him a thousand times a day. He tells her, in a voice somewhat feebler than usual, the royal anecdotes of that royal bedchamber. He likes to watch her absorbed, reverent face as she listens, for Miriam is loyalist to the core, as a good woman should be, and has the Divine Right of Kings written indelibly on her simple heart.

'But they were human too—some of them,' finishes My Lord with a sort of chuckle, and turning on his pillow to look at his listener.

She sits by his side the greater part of the day. She brings her prayer-book and a volume of sermons given to her on her marriage. My Lord listens with an exemplary patience to the long-winded wordiness of the Georgian divine. He thinks, by a certain stoplessness in the reader s method, that she does not always grasp the somewhat obscure meaning. He is sure by her sweet voice and tender face that she is wholly edified nevertheless. Sometimes during the readings she

puts one of the babies on the foot of the patient's bed, that he may have the inestimable privilege of looking at it when he feels inclined.

'See us, Ruther,' says My Lord when the Chaplain finds them thus one day. 'After my way of living, doesn't this strike you as a damned odd way of dying?'

On Sunday Miriam reads the Order for Morning Prayer with My Lord stumbling through the responses. The situation strikes him as ludicrous at first; but Miriam is very sweet and grave and good. He hears the rhythm of her voice in the tender majesty of the old prayers as one hears sweet singing in a dream. Miriam is infinitely conscientious, and reads them every one. And when the Chaplain points out to her that, in consideration of the patient's weakness, she might omit to pray for the Parliament, My Lord from his bed says, 'No, no. Dammy, they need it,' and begs that Miriam may be left to her own devices.

My Lord grows gradually weaker as the summer advances. Before the flowers have faded and the leaves fallen he is too weak to talk at all. He sleeps a great deal. When he is awake his eyes follow Miriam, and when she is more divinely simple than usual his lips wear a smile. It is

apparent that when she leaves him he is uneasy. Her simplicity is worth at such a time all the wit and sprightliness in the world.

Before the end comes, in a sultry night, My Lord talks ramblingly, with a new strength, of his wild youth, of the companions long dead, who belonged with himself to a society most brilliant, corrupt, and artificial. He starts once from his pillow with an oath. By his bedside Miriam is kneeling bewildered, a white figure in the half-darkness.

He repeats the snatch of a wild song in his dying voice, and cries, with an exceeding bitter cry, the name of the son who disgraced it.

But, before he dies, for one quiet moment his reason comes back to him. And the last impression on the mind of My Lord, who has been a sinner, is of Miriam with clear uplifted face and folded hands.



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## *'MELIA*

'L'esprit est toujours la dupe du cœur'

'Melia is of the gentility, genteel. 'Melia's Pa—she speaks of him fondly by this abbreviation—is a dreadfully successful, fat, pompous, aggressive, well-to-do tradesman. 'Melia's Ma is a stout lady bursting apoplectically out of a satin dress. 'Melia's sisters are crushingly superior persons in black silk at Peter Robinson's. And 'Melia's brothers are the class of young men who shout witticisms to each other from bicycles on the Brighton road on half-holidays.

'Melia is perhaps two-and-thirty. She has a face very refined and delicate, a taste which leads her into pronounced fashions and pearls in the morning, and a large and terrible fringe, which she calls her 'Princess M'y,' and wears with perfect modesty, gentleness, and simplicity. 'Melia is, it is to be feared, a simple person in many ways. At the chic school at which her Pa placed her at great expense (mentioning the exact sum it cost him

every day at dinner), 'Melia found herself unable to take in any of the polite, superficial, and wholly unsuitable accomplishments which the other young ladies may be described as having lapped up thirstily. At the present time, when the literary Julia from Peter Robinson's, reading the last feminine and fictional treatise on the immorality of man, with her feet on the sofa, says, 'Lor, 'Melia, you are a cure! and after all Pa spent on your learning, never so much as to take up a book—well, I'm sure,' 'Melia shows by the flush in her pale face that she is sensible of the justice of the accusation.

But if her literature never goes beyond the careful study of a penny fashion paper—and indeed it does not—she has some little commercial shrewdness to take its place. 'Melia is never to be cheated. She is never taken in by the blandishments of shopwalkers when she goes shopping in the fashionable region which she speaks of as Up West, or crushed by the scorn of the stylish person behind the counter. 'Through Pa having been in the linendrapery himself,' says 'Melia with perfect simplicity, and meaning no aspersion upon the parental character, 'I know what tricks they're up to.' Which tricks she repudiates with a flush of excitement and resolution upon her delicate face.

It is fancied, indeed, that 'Melia's own integrity is of that kind which would cheat an enemy to serve a friend with perfect straightforwardness and a conscience as untroubled as a baby's sleep.

At home it is to be feared that she is not nearly so beloved as loving. She can't, in fact, read like Julia, and can only sit with eyes full of a dumb sort of wistfulness and a very tender and longing admiration when Clara dashes out one of her four marches on the cottage piano in the evenings, leaving that polite and elderly instrument (which has been bought second-hand from a quietly decorous spinster in the country) quite shocked and astonished. Beyond an aptitude for trimming hats, which is a good deal trespassed on by her female relatives, 'Melia has indeed no accomplishments at all, unless one counts such very old-fashioned ones as kindness and love. 'Melia is devoted to her family. If she is indeed superior to them in refinement of heart as she is in refinement of feature, her devotion to her Ma, who is a florid and breathless person, is not in the least disturbed by that lady's comfortable earthiness, or by seeing her drink stout in a shay outside a public-house on Bank Holiday. While, if 'Melia is herself vulgar, as persons seeing her in a flower

of a bonnet always slightly on one side, her somewhat disordered Princess M'y, and a style of clothing which she fondly fancies to be the style Up West, have supposed, she at least escapes the supreme vulgarity of being ashamed of vulgar relations.

As for her Pa, 'Melia speaks of him rather regretfully, but with no kind of malice, as rather harsh. The tradesman, whose god is prosperity, can't, indeed, forgive 'Melia her inability to get on in life and a simplicity and unselfishness which would be enough to ruin anyone's worldly progress. 'But, lor!' says 'Melia, coming in rather flushed and with marks of recent tears on her face to take tea with a friend, after a battle royal with her parent, 'all Pas have their little whims, and us gals have to humour them.' She forgives Pa, whose little whims are, it is to be feared, only too frequent, with a forgiveness which is as complete as a child's. She forgives, if she perceives (which she probably does not), that there is need for forgiveness, the maternal anxiety to marry her off to anyone as soon as possible, and the maternal resentment against a nature which is full of those good things that lead to no worldly advancement. She is patient—how patient Heaven knows!—with Julia and Clara, who are dreadfully superior

and successful. She fits their dresses with inimitable good-temper and her mouth full of pins. She thinks that their florid complexions and showroom figures are very beautiful indeed. She is proud of their good position, and, in some lonely, far off, indefinable manner, of their possession of the young men who walk out with them on Sundays. She does not indeed wish for a suitor of her own. Has a self-respect which repudiates with a very fine dignity the advances of the young men in Pa's shop—Pa having now gone, in his daughter's phrase, into the crockery. 'Melia, indeed, directly attacked on the point, relegates her own marriage to some distant period when she will, she says, with entire good faith and simplicity, look about among the widowers.

In the meantime the great love of her heart goes out to her brother. Alfred, whom Amelia calls 'H'alf' by way of endearing diminutive, is, it must be confessed, a depressing young man to look at, with a very mournful complexion. As he divides his time between a stuffy shop and a recumbent position on a bicycle, this unhealthiness is not surprising. It does not, at least, take from the quantity or the quality of 'Melia's affection. She waits upon H'alf when he comes

home in the evening. She talks about him to her friends with a quaint pride which is touching, though it possibly also strikes them in the light of a bore. He is good enough to allow her to mend his socks, and look at him over them in the evening in the parlour with eyes very fond and kind. And when H'alf is taken ill—not very ill at first—'Melia at once constitutes herself his nurse.

The illness begins about the time of the family's annual trip to Great Yarmouth. 'Melia has always been told that she enjoys these holidays, and believes it. Her faith even carries her so far as to make her think that she enjoys the sea journey which begins them. She has been wont on such occasions to sit on deck with her complexion varying from green to grey, her fringe very much out of curl, her stylish bonnet tilted dejectedly over one ear, and her eyes full of patience and apology while Pa, who is dreadfully blusterous and rather qualmish in temper, abuses her as, 'You're a nice one, you are, to bring out and give pleasure to. This is a pretty return, this is, for me and Ma having took your ticket, and spent no end to let you travel saloon and genteel. This is gratitood after all the money as has been spent on you, this is'—and to apologise very humbly indeed for the

base thanklessness of a nature which cannot duly appreciate even the Yarmouth boat. On this present occasion indeed 'Melia thinks nothing of herself and everything of Alfred. When they have arrived at their destination she wheels the sofa of the smart lodging they occupy close to the open window, so that H'alf lying there may be cheered by having mysterious musicians, performing fleas, and a low grade of nigger minstrel as close to him as possible.

In the morning, brazen and hot, with the keen Yarmouth wind nipping round the corners, when the rest of the family have started, violently energetic and early, on some distant excursion, it is left to 'Melia to wheel the invalid about in his chair, and bear with the caprice and fractiousness of a failing health. She takes him sometimes on to the sands, black with excursionists, buys him 'Tit-Bits' out of a shabby purse, and sits with her back leaning up against his chair while she calculates in a simply eccentric mind, whose want of mathematical faculty has greatly enraged her Pa in the shop, the precise amount of benefit each breeze from the sea is likely to convey to her invalid. When H'alf is recommended to be on the sea, and not merely by it, it is 'Melia who takes him what she fatally miscalls a 'Shilling Pleasure'

with a sublime self-sacrifice; and when H'alf, whom the air seems to revive a little, observes that 'Melia don't seem partial to the motion, 'Melia, fanning herself faintly with a pocket-handkerchief, replies, 'Oh, it don't matter, H'alf. It's good for the system,' and even attempts a smile. When the others have returned from their excursion she slips out sometimes, with the chic bonnet blowing about on her head in a manner which Clara, who is exquisitely neat and selfish, says is scarcely respectable, and buys H'alf a relish to his tea in the shape of a crab or winkles, which seem calculated to put an end to his life immediately.

He does indeed get worse as the days go on, and as he gets worse clings more and more to 'Melia, who has been so vague and irresponsible all her life that only the greatness of the need and of her devotion could make her different now. The Doctor is himself shocked, first of all, at the appearance of this nurse, with her simple, flighty manner, her untidy hair, and a style of dress which includes aluminium lockets at nine o'clock in the morning; but he finds, pretty soon, that 'Melia is worth many Claras and Julias, and has, under that veneer of eccentric gentility, a heart most faithful and tender.

She nurses her patient at least with a devotion which has no fault but excess. She is with him all day, and almost all night. When he wakes, as he is accustomed to do, in the early dawn, after a brief and troubled sleep, he finds her standing by his bedside removing curling pins from her Princess M'y, and looking down at him with pitiful eyes. When he apologises for asking her to shake his pillows for perhaps the fiftieth time in an hour she answers as usual, 'Lor, H'alf! it don't matter,' with her vague and cheerful smile. She tries to obey the Doctor's mandate, and change the current of the patient's ideas by describing to him the select fashions that Julia and Clara have met on the pier, while she refrains, with a tact which is genius—or love—from conveying to him the least hint that she misses the sight of these glories herself. She does indeed run out occasionally, once to say to a recreant chemist, with her business instincts roused and her delicate face rather flushed and nervous, 'None of your stale drugs for us, young man;' while, another time, she runs the length of the parade, with her bonnet as usual half off, breathlessly, to bribe a Mysterious Musician to take up his place for half an hour daily before H'alf's

windows, and winks so enormously at this artist when he arrives on the scene of action, as a signal to him to preserve the dark secret between them, that he not unnaturally supposes her to be mad. She sleeps—and says, eagerly, and nervous lest Ma should take her post from her, that she sleeps soundly—in a chair by the patient's bed. Yet there is never a whisper of her name from the feeble lips that she cannot hear; and she has known, for many weeks at least, no sleep so profound that the touch of a weak hand cannot rouse her. She is, indeed, at every hour, quite willing, loving, patient, and eccentric. She repudiates help as she repudiates the idea that her own health will not stand the strain upon it. And a great colour comes into her face when Clara suggests that H'alf must be getting pretty tired of 'Melia, and would like to see more of herself or Julia for a change.

To her sisters the sick man is a brother—and one of many brothers. To 'Melia he is the only creature out of all the lonely world to whom she is necessary; the first and only one who has made great claim on her time, her attention, and her affection; the only one who is in some sense dependent upon her and, as it were, at

her mercy. So that it may be imagined how she loves him.

Towards the end she never leaves him. She is glad—unconsciously, perhaps—that the nursing is painful and repulsive. If it were easy she would have no way of showing her affection. Her simple and devoted mind takes no account, until very nearly the end, of her own pain and weariness of body. And then, compelled for H'alf's sake to heed it, she finishes, in a tumbler, the remains of H'alf's discarded medicines, with a simple satisfaction and an unquestioning faith which seems to have its reward.

For it is not until the hand which she has held all night in her living one is cold and dead that the old Doctor, coming into the room very early in the morning, finds her asleep—in the deep sleep of great exhaustion—at her post.

Many years later, when H'alf, whose living and dying has been but an episode in their lives, and who has been more or less forgotten by his elder sisters, 'Melia, who is still vague and simple, and has not yet found, or perhaps even looked for, the widower of her promise, comes to stay with Clara, and is discovered by that correct lady, one Sunday night, crying softly to herself, with her flighty

head resting, in a very ungenteel manner, upon her arms on the kitchen table.

'Lor! 'Melia,' says Clara, 'what a turn you give me! Is anybody dead?'

'No one—newer—than H'alf,' says 'Melia, rather brokenly, and with a sort of apology in her voice. 'But it do seem as he were the only one I ever come by—who couldn't get on without me.'

Which is the single excuse that can be made for such a foolishness and fidelity.

## *THE LABOURER*

'Ce qu'on gagne en gloire on le perd en amour'

John lives all his life in a remote Norfolk village. He belongs to a generation that has almost passed away. When he is a boy the Battle of Waterloo has still to be fought and the cheap newspaper to be born.

John is just a little thick and agricultural. He has no wit at all, but perhaps a very little latent wisdom. He can, of course, neither read nor write. In his time such accomplishments are regarded as entirely superfluous for the class to which he belongs. His knowledge of politics, therefore, does not go beyond a doggerel and patriotic ballad about Bonaparty which he has picked up in the village alehouse. His interest as a young man in the fate of the empire cannot be said to be particularly keen. He is indeed at that date entirely engrossed in mangel-wurzels and love.

John has to get up very early in the morning

He sits very contentedly in his garden in the summer sunshine, and dozes a great deal

to go about his business. He earns, by a great deal of hard work, a very modest wage. He puts by some of it—for a purpose. Every now and then he falls into iniquity, and takes a little too much beer. But upon the whole he has a good deal of self-respect, and even a certain sort of independence and dignity. When the squire or the parson stop to have a talk with him he pulls at a reddish forelock at very frequent intervals, to express a most honest respect. John is always in church on Sunday. He sings the familiar hymns which he learnt by heart in childhood in a voice wholly fervent and unmusical. During the sermon he looks at Sally, whom he is going to marry some day, and who sits very pretty and conscious under her shady hat.

John has no club to go to in the winter evenings. He dozes comfortably in his own kitchen instead. There is no Coal Fund, or Savings Bank, or Working Men's Institute provided for his benefit. He is not hemmed in by charities like his grandson of to-day. There is no competition to provide for John living and to pay his funeral expenses when dead. Perhaps John is not the worse man because he is wholly self-dependent. When indeed for the first and only time in his stalwart life he falls ill,

the parson brings him a couple of bottles of port, and the squire's daughter, who is pretty and pious, produces quivering jellies from a covered basket. The parson looks in upon John pretty often. He tells a good story or two to appeal to the patient's somewhat stolid risible faculties, and says rather clumsily, as he leaves him, 'Don't let the dust grow on your Bible, John.' And John, gratefully remembering the port, says, 'Nay, nay, sir.' And when the squire's daughter comes next day she reads him the Sermon on the Mount.

As a lover John is somewhat clumsy and exceedingly faithful. He has lived next door to Sally all her life, and remembers her when she was quite a little girl. Sally is very modest and blushing, with a round little waist and blooming country cheeks. When they are married it pleases John very much, as he smokes his pipe stolidly in the front of the fire in the evening, to see Sally sitting on a footstool trimming her Sunday hat and regarding the blue ribbons, with her pretty head first on this side and then on that.

John does not pay Sally any compliments. His speech is quite uncouth and to the point. Many of his expressions are, it is to be feared, what would now be considered coarse. But if he uses words

and says openly things which would cause polite persons to blush, John's heart has many of those finer instincts which are invidiously called the instincts of a gentleman.

John has the greatest respect for Sally. During their courtship he satisfies his pugilistic tendencies with much zest upon a rejected suitor of Sally's who ventures to speak of her disrespectfully. He has a certain reverence, moreover, in his affection for Sally's babies, and is especially attached to the first, who is a little girl. John counsels, with a certain heavy paternal wisdom, that the baby be soon 'took to the parson.'

'It keeps 'em healthy,' says John. And Sally being also imbued with this simple superstition, the baby is 'took to the parson' and christened by a scriptural name as soon as may be.

John's life is not troubled with eventfulness. Once, indeed, a bad time comes. John is out of work and Sally and the children fall ill. The children, with John's tender and clumsy help, scramble somehow into convalescence; but Sally is very bad indeed. John sits by her bedside hour after hour. He is very stupid and loving. He does not know at all what to do except hold her hand, and now and then straighten her pillows.

'You are not a-dying, Sally, are you?' he says desperately. And Sally, opening her eyes and seeing his haggard face, says, 'No, John—don't worrit for me.'

And John sits very quietly until the night covers them both.

Once John goes to Norwich. He regards this as a very great event indeed. He dates all time from this visit. 'Old parson died,' he says, 'a matter o' six years after I see'd Norwich.' The coming of the new parson is a great event also. The marriage of the squire's daughter a momentous occasion, of which not a single detail is ever forgotten.

'That was the time as you had your new gownd,' says John. And Sally smiles a little as she remembers the 'gownd' fresh and charming. By this time her youthful prettiness has faded a little. But though her figure is no longer delicate or her complexion blooming, John is still convinced in his faithful conservatism that Sally is the most beautiful creature in the world. He loves her just as he loved her when they were first married. They are not, indeed, sentimental. With ten shillings a week and five children there is no time for sentimentality. But that there is no time for faithfulness, goodness, and affection—who shall say?

In due time the children grow up and work for themselves. John is still a labourer, having been unable out of ten shillings a week to lay by a competence for his old age. But either he does not think of the future at all or else he has, in his stolid way, a never-spoken trust in a Providence who has been always kind. And one day Sally dies, and the light of his simple life goes out for ever.

To-day in a quaint little almshouse in that benighted Norfolk village there lives a very old man. He is so old that the present is all dim and obscure to him, and only the past stands out clearly. He sits very contentedly in his garden in the summer sunshine and dozes a great deal. He hears in a pleasant indistinctness the murmuring of the bees and the songs of the birds. The voices of the people who come to see him sound, too, a great way off, and the meaning of what they ask him takes a long time to reach his old brain.

'He ought to be intensely interesting, you know,' says Antiquaria full of intelligence. But he is not.

'What do you remember to have heard about Waterloo?' asks Antiquaria at the top of her voice.

Nothing, at first. Then he murmurs very

indistinctly a line or two of the old alehouse ballad about Bonaparty.

'Parson said 'twas Waterloo day as I bought the ring for Sally,' he adds more clearly.

'Wasn't there great excitement in the village about the battle?' persists Antiquaria.

And he looks at her with his old eyes and says, 'I dunno. 'Twas the day I bought Sally the ring.'

That is all. If he had ever taken any interest in the fate of Europe, which he did not, he would have forgotten it. And now only remembers a crisis in the history of nations as the day he bought Sally the ring.

As the years pass a thousand changes take place round him, and he does not perceive them. A modern and spiritual ecclesiastic has long replaced the old parsons with their muscular Christianity, their good stories, and their port wine. The place in church where Sally sang Tate and Brady devoutly beneath the demurest coal-scuttle bonnet is occupied by correct little boys with neat surplices and Gregorian chants.

The village politicians have long come to the comforting and fashionable conclusion that whatever is, is wrong, and that, as a preliminary to any

sort of true justice and equality, all existing institutions must be razed to the ground.

And John, who used to be embarrassed to foolishness by the honour of a chat with the squire, and was not even aware that he was miserable, downtrodden, and oppressed, blinks his old eyes pleasantly in the sunshine and lives in his recollections. He is capable at last of no interest at all except in that fair, far past which he spent with Sally. The present is a vague and pleasantly confusing dream. The people round him are only shadows. He has to be fed and tended like an infant. When the vicar reads to him a pious work in a shout he responds 'A-mon, A-mon,' just as the clerk responded in church in his youth. But of the substance of that pious work he comprehends nothing at all. His simple mind and his tired body are alike at rest.

One summer the woman who takes care of him vociferates loudly in his ear that she has had a letter to say his granddaughter is coming to see him. In spite of Mrs. Jones's shouts, her words convey very little to the poor simple old mind. She shakes John a little, not unkindly, for in a perfectly practical way she is fond of him, but with the idea, perhaps, of shaking her meaning into his

brain. And he comprehends at last that he is to have a visitor. All his visitors like to hear the lines about Bonaparty, and he murmurs them over to himself in his tottering voice so as to be in readiness. On the auspicious day he has his chair wheeled as usual into the little garden. He dozes there, also as usual. And wakes up suddenly, and there before him—with her blooming country face and the sunshine on her hair and the bonnet with blue ribbons hanging from her arm—is Sally at one-and-twenty.

'Why, it's Sally!' says the old voice with a piping childish cry of joy. 'It seems a sight of time you've left me alone. Have you been minding the children, lass?'

Perhaps she has—from Heaven. The granddaughter, who has never seen Sally, but has withal some of Sally's tenderness in her heart, does not undeceive him. She kneels by his side and puts her cheek warm and young against his wrinkled face. And he babbles to her—as Sally—with a complete childish delight. He recalls a hundred incidents of his simple life. He strokes her hair with his feeble fingers. And when Mrs. Jones comes out to invite the visitor to take 'a bite of something' before she leaves, with one old hand

over the girl's John is asleep as tranquilly as his child may have slept on Sally's breast sixty years ago.

'His mind must be in a shocking state of muddle, you know,' says Antiquaria, with her intellectual nose in the air when she hears of the episode. 'A low sort of existence altogether, isn't it? The whole life must have been terribly narrow and material.'

Perhaps, Antiquaria. Very narrow, very honest, and very stupid. Very tender towards Sally and the children, very God-fearing, very blundering, human, and simple. A life, as seen by Modern Enlightenment, wholly discouraging.

But as seen by Heaven—who knows?

## *INTELLECTA*

'Les femmes courent risque d'être extrêmes en tout'

The intellect itself is not objectionable. In fact, intellect is an excellent thing. It is a better thing than genius for practical domestic purposes. For genius is apt to be a nuisance. It always gets up late, and is not particular about its bath. It is not at all practical, and the tradesmen fail to understand it. No, the fault seems to lie in the use that Intellecta makes of her mind—not in the mind itself.

Who has not heard of the Scotchman who introduced his native thistle into some colony where the soil was rich and the rainfall, it is to be presumed, bountiful? Nothing but thistle grows in that land now, and the Scotchman has left. Some imprudent women have been introducing intellect and other things into the feminine mind, and, like the thistle, they are beginning to spread.

Intellecta makes her first appearance at a certain town on the Cam where young women have

most distinctly and unblushingly followed young men. Intellecta attends lectures which are not intended for her delicate ears, and the men are forced to blush, merely because Intellecta is unmoved.

She drags her hair back from a brow which would look better beneath a foolish feminine fringe, and while the lecturer lectures she leans that brow upon a large firm hand. She is preternaturally serious, and there is a certain harassed go-ahead look in her eyes before which even a junior dean may quail. The lecturer is an elderly person of the unabashed type. 'And now, gentlemen,' he says from time to time, which is rude because it ignores Intellecta. She, however, does not appear to notice. She leans the rounded pensive brow on her hand and simply laps up knowledge. One can see it bulging the pensive brow. The dragged back hair gives her head a distended, uncomfortable look, as if it is suffering from the effects of mental indigestion.

Intellecta's father is a well-known dissenting minister in a large manufacturing town. He knows the value of learning on the principle that the pauper must needs know the value of money, and Intellecta is sent to a high school. She graduates,

or whatever they do at high schools, and obtains a scholarship. There is no small rejoicing in a chaste, dissenting way; and very few people know that only three girls are entered for the scholarship. One retires with measles; the second, Intellecta's sole rival, bursts into hysterical tears at the sight of the Algebra paper, and Intellecta simply canters in.

What Intellecta does not know in the way of knowledge is not worth knowing after she takes that scholarship. But some say that knowledge may come while wisdom lingers.

From the very first Intellecta's only joy is an examination paper. She studies these in the privacy of her apartment. She walks down Petty Cury with bundles of them under her arm. All her learning is acquired from a competitive point of view. She does not want to be learned; she desires to pass examinations. Her knowledge is a near approach to cunning. Moreover, she passes her examinations. She exceeds her father's fondest dreams. She dashes the undergraduates' hopes to the ground.

She continues to attend lectures, surrounded now by a guardian atmosphere of learning. She despises 'boys' more than ever. She sees through

them, and knows that they are only working because they are afraid of their fathers, or to earn a living in the future. Whereas she is working for something higher and nobler—to wit, the emancipation of woman—the march of intellect. All the while her hair recedes farther and farther back from her brow, as if the march of intellect entails pushing through tight places.

'We are progressing,' she is heard to say in a deep masculine voice to a lady with short grey hair in King's Cross Station. Short grey hair is, by the way, sometimes conducive to cold shivers down the Philistine back. 'We are progressing. We are getting our feet upon the ladder.'

And good serviceable understandings they are, with square toes. That is the last of her, so far as Cambridge is concerned. From this time her walk is upon the broader stage of life.

She is next seen at an intellectual gathering in a picture gallery, where she comes suddenly round a corner upon two young people, who are not intellectual, discussing ices and other pleasant things away from the busy hum of debate.

Intellecta sniffs. Which is rather to her credit, as a remnant of a vanishing femininity. The question this evening is one of political economy. How,

in fact, are a number of ladies and gentlemen assembled in a picture-gallery in Piccadilly to reduce the population of China? Intellecta is great. She proves mathematically that things are really coming to a pretty pass. If China is allowed to go on in this reckless way some apocryphal supply will exceed a fictitious demand. At this point an old gentleman wakes up and says 'Hear, hear!' And immediately afterwards 'Don't, Maria!' which induces one to believe that he has been brought to see the error of his ways by the pinch marital.

Intellecta speaks for twenty-five minutes in a deep, emotional voice, and when she finishes there is in the atmosphere a singular feeling of being no farther on. She has spoken for twenty-five minutes, and she has said nothing.

Others speak with a similar result. They are apparently friends of Intellecta's—persons who agree to be tolerant of each other's voices, and on certain evenings they invite the benighted to come and assimilate knowledge. They soon reduce the population of China by carrying a few motions in that picture gallery in Piccadilly. And there are people who pretend that it is useless to educate women even in face of such grand results as this!

'Of course,' Intellecta is heard to say at a dinner-table, 'of course Dr. Kudos may be a great man. I do not say that he is not. I went in to dinner with him the other evening; I tried him on several subjects, and I cannot say that he had much that was new to tell me on any of them.'

That is the sort of person she is. She is fearless and open. She would question the accuracy of Gibbon if that reverend historian was not beyond her reach. The grasp of her mind is simply enormous. She will take up, say, political economy, study it for a couple of months, and quite master it. She is then ready, nay, anxious, to lay down the law upon matters politico-economical in a mixed assembly. If she is in the room, her deep emotional voice may generally be heard laying down the law upon some point or other.

Languages she masters *en passant*. She learns French thoroughly in five weeks in order to read a good translation of one of Tolstoi's novels. She has not time for Russian, she says. She has not the time, that is all. Having acquired the tongue of the lightsome Gaul, she proceeds one evening to discourse in it to a gentleman who has no English; and the Frenchman is apparently struck dumb—possibly by her learning.

Intellecta is now getting on towards middle age, as, alas! are those who sat with her in the lecture-rooms by the Cam. She still has the go-ahead look: there are one or two grey hairs among those dragged back from her forehead; and a keen observer—one who has known her all along—may detect in her spectacled eyes a subtle dissatisfaction. Can it be that Intellecta is born before her time? It would almost seem that the world is not quite ripe for her yet. She is full of learning. She has much to say upon all subjects. She is a great teacher. But why that mystic smile behind the spectacles of Dr. Kudos?

'She only repeats,' he says gently. 'She only teaches what she has been taught. She is nothing but a talking book.'

The old gentleman may be right. There may be something in him, though Intellecta cannot find it. For he has seen many men and many things in books and elsewhere. It may be that Intellecta can only teach what she has been taught. And what she has learnt at Cambridge Whitechapel does not want to know. That which she has seen at Whitechapel is odoriferous in the nostrils of Cambridge.

That dissatisfied look haunts those who remem-

ber laughing at Intellecta when she attended her first lecture. Some of those men are celebrated now; some are leading lights at the Bar; others are pillars of the Church; the rest are merely obscure and happy, and have quite forgotten to be learned. But Intellecta is where she was. She is still a learned woman, and nothing else. She is still looking for an outlet for all the knowledge that is in her brain, which has never germinated—which she has not been able to turn to account.

Intellecta despises women who have husbands and babies, and no high aspirations. She despises still more, perhaps, those who dream vaguely of the encumbrances mentioned. But even those whose dreams can never be realised have not the look that Intellecta has in her eyes.

She is very busy. She addresses meetings of factory girls in the Mile End Road, and she will tell you in her earnest tones that she is due in Bradford to-morrow evening, where a great work is being carried on. She is always improving her mind during the intervals snatched from the work of telling others to go and do likewise. She still finds time to drop in on a science and master it. The old familiar curse of the lecture-room is still upon her; and she laps up eagerly knowledge

which the limited male intellect is inclined to think she would be better without. But it is not for the sake of the knowledge that she seeks it. It is the old story of the examination paper over again.

Her chief aim in life is to forward the cause of education. She is one of the prime movers in the great schemes for bringing knowledge to the masses—instead of letting the masses come and take it when they have need of it. She may be seen at cheap suburban lectures in an ill-fitting cloth dress, leaning that heavy brow on the large firm hand, drinking in the lecturer's periods.

She does not go much to church. She complains that the clergy are deficient in intellectual power. There is a mystery overhanging her religious tenets. She has learnt too much. It is often so with women. One finds that as soon as they know more than the local curate they begin to look down upon St. Paul, good Bishop Butler, and a few others who may not have been intellectual as the word is understood to-day, but who nevertheless wrote some solid stuff in their time.

Intellecta is not a tragedy. Not by any means. She would be indignant at the thought. She is naturally of a grave temperament—all great thinkers are. She is devoid of any sense of the

ridiculous, which is a great blessing—for Intellecta. She is profoundly convinced that she is an interesting woman. She feels at the cheap lectures that the local young women of mind nudge each other and ask who she is. She trusts they will profit by her example, and in time they may perhaps acquire her power of concentration—they may, with perseverance, learn to bring their whole mind as she brings hers (a much larger affair) to bear upon the question in hand. She does not know that they are, as a matter of fact, wondering where on earth she bought that hat, and longing for the lecture to be over that they may walk home with a person who is waiting for them outside.

There is no one waiting for Intellecta outside—not even a cabman.

Being devoid of humour, she is naturally without knowledge of the pathetic, and therefore does not see herself as others see her. She is probably unaware of that dissatisfied look in her eyes. It is a physical matter, like a wrinkle or a droop of the lips. It is the small remnant of the woman quailing before the mind.

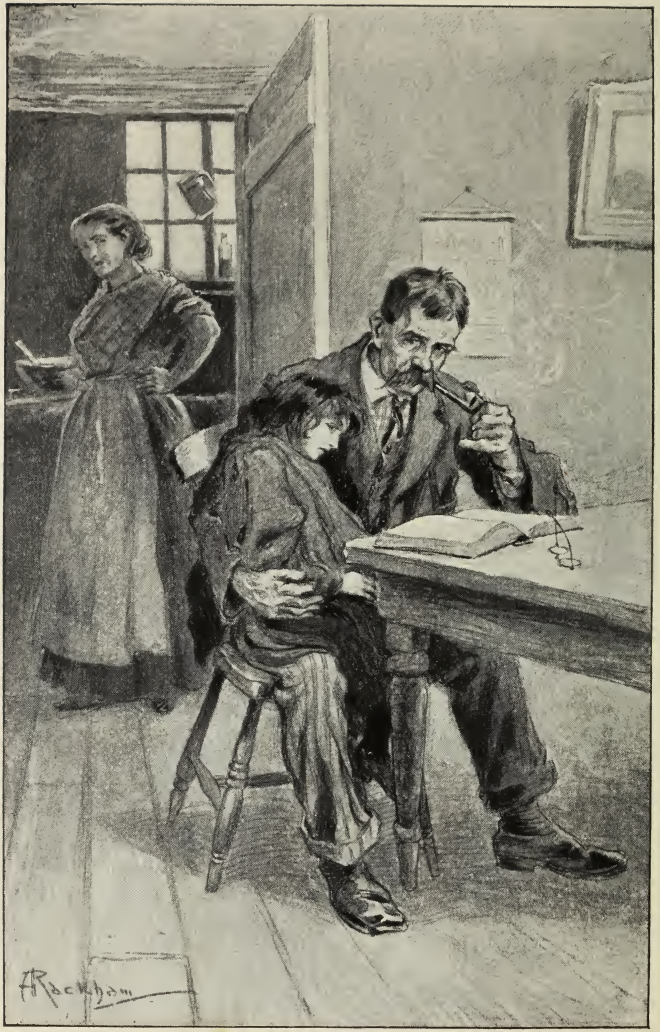
'Knowledge is power,' she always says when

driven into a corner by some argumentative and mistaken man.

'Yes—but it is not happiness,' Dr. Kudos replies. 'And we are placed here to try and be happy.'

'We are making progress,' says Intellecta still. 'We are getting our feet upon the ladder.'

Yes, Intellecta; but whither does that ladder lead?




She sits on James's knee, while he reads Bulbs

## *THE SOLDIER-SERVANT*

'La politesse de l'esprit consiste à penser des choses honnêtes et délica'es.'

James has been through the Crimea. He has a number of medals, of which, very likely, he is vastly proud, but which he never wears. He has very seldom been heard to give an account of his exploits. But then he is very seldom heard to give an account of anything, being a perfect bulwark of silence, and preferring to contribute nothing towards a conversation except a few grunts.

Manners, indeed, are not James's strong point. The Crimea may have rubbed them off. Or he may always have despised them. He is now employed as a gardener and handy man on week-days, while on Sundays he blows the organ at a neighbouring church with indomitable perseverance and strength.

It must not, however, be supposed that James knows—or wishes to know—anything about matters ecclesiastical. He blows the organ with the air of

one who would say, 'This seems to me confounded nonsense. Why can't you say your prayers without all this noise? Still, you must have your whims, I suppose, and I must humour them.' He so far humours the whims of the Parson-in-Chief as to take down for his benefit the Easter texts with which the guileless James has ornamented the church at Christmas. It appears, very likely, to James that one verse of Scripture does quite as well as another, and is equally true at any season of the year. But he undoes his handiwork with a perfectly good-natured scornfulness, and with the best-tempered and impolitest of grins upon his countenance.

James, both as gardener and churchman, has the old soldierly virtue of implicit obedience developed to an extent for which the ordinary civilian is quite unprepared. When his mistress—a lady of vacillating turn of mind—says, 'James, you really must kill that cat,' on the spur of an impetuous moment, the cat is in dying agonies five minutes later, and while the mistress is lamenting its decease in the drawing-room she can behold James from the windows mowing the lawn in the calm consciousness of virtue and with an unmoved diligence.

When the master complains that the whole flower garden contains nothing but pinks—which James has been growing, with much trouble, in serried ranks like an army—by the next morning there is not a single pink left in the garden, and James may be seen quietly pitchforking a bonfire behind the shrubbery.

James's horticultural instincts incline as a rule towards the useful rather than the beautiful, and he cultivates vast quantities of cabbages with perfect steadfastness and indifference to the fact that no one wants or eats them. But he has so much of the true gardener nature within him—in his case entirely free and untrammelled—that when Miss Laura trips into the garden with a smile, a rustic basket, and a pair of scissors, he shouts from the cabbage-bed, 'Why don't you leave them 'ere roses alone?' And Laura retires quite abashed into the house. 'James's rudeness is really dreadful, Charles,' says the mistress. When he is shown the new baby, and asked if it is not a remarkably fine child, he is understood to say, with his contemptuous smile, and between grunts, 'Pretty fair, pretty fair,' and when the mistress points out to him some beautiful drawings in a weekly paper illustrative of the

Crimea he gives way to a deeply scornful guffaw.

It is surmised that James has, on the whole, rather a poor opinion of the weaker sex. He listens to the mistress's This will be best, James, or perhaps that, or what do you think of a third (and totally opposite) alternative? with a good-natured tolerance for a race of beings who cannot make up their minds, or have no minds to make up.

He never flirts with the maids, his disposition being infinitely removed from any species of gallantry. Besides, he has a wife at home. The wife—familiarly 'Liza—is a voluble and excited female of shrewish tongue and a particularly energetic temper. Fifteen years ago, when she beguiled the unwary James into matrimony, she may very likely have been an attractive person in her style. That James could at any time have been attractive in *his* style is scarcely conceivable. But very likely his stalwart six feet and his red coat did much better than the honeyed words and flattering phrases of which he can never have had to accuse himself.

James sits at home in the evenings after his work and tranquilly peruses an exciting manual

on Bulbs. As a rule James does not hold much with reading, considering it an unpractical and even feminine employment, and having met in the course of his own experience a number of good men who did particularly well without it.

But Bulbs are a duty. They may also be a refuge from 'Liza. So strong is the force of habit that her running accompaniment of volubility does not in the least disturb the placid James at his literature.

When 'Liza is more than usually objectionable—which happens on an average about once a week—James sends her to Coventry. She abuses him with a tongue which it is to be feared is not a little coarse. But it is conceivable that the army has prepared James for some slight lack of refinement, just as it has inculcated in him a habit of indomitable self-control. James never abuses 'Liza. He is a rock of patience and silence. He immerses himself deeply in the Bulbs, and sits calm and unmoved amid the domestic thunders.

James has children. Boys, for the most part, to whom he has conscientiously done his duty by a periodical thrashing in the back yard. Albeit James has a heart for these children—a heart

which is even very soft and kind. And there is a rough justice in his treatment of them which they very likely prefer to the mother's unreasonable kisses and blows.

There is one little daughter to whom James's affection goes out with a great strength and devotion. The little daughter has inherited to a marked degree his silent ways and faithful heart. Her mother, with the terrible plain speaking of the poor, has condemned her to her face as an unlikely child, and as ugly as they're made. And Nellie has hidden that poor ugly little face on her father's rough shoulder, and has found in his awkward kindness and homely care for her as happy a child-life as can be.

She sits on James's knee while he reads Bulbs. He takes her to church with him on Sundays, seats her near him, and addresses encouraging and audible remarks to her in the pauses of his organ-blowing.

On Bank Holidays and other gala occasions the two go country walks together. Neither of them say much, both considering very likely that conversation mars enjoyment, and that they get a great deal too much of it at home. But James has Nellie's small hand in his vast horny palm,

and it is to be believed that they understand each other perfectly.

On one memorable occasion they spend a happy day at Margate. The beauties of sands black with excursionists and of a jetty packed to suffocation appeal to both very much indeed. Perhaps upon the principle that one is never so much alone as in a crowd. Or with the idea that this is seeing a fashionable watering-place at the height of its glory and to perfection. Or merely because they are together.

Nellie is very tired after so long a day. Tired, pale, and shivering, and 'Liza says, 'You've done for this child, drat you!' with a great deal of force and energy, and carries Nellie up to bed in a temper. 'Liza, like a great many other people, is always cross when she is anxious. And that night James tramps a long six miles for the doctor. There is a cold fear creeping about his heart, the presence of which he is, somehow, afraid of acknowledging, and he says to the doctor, 'Not much wrong—nothing but a cold,' several times over, and with deep grunts. It *is* nothing but a cold at first. But it is a cold that turns to a high fever, which rages in Nellie's frail body and beats down her feeble strength. James does not leave

her room for a week. His master considers so much devotion very unnecessary, and intimates to James that his place cannot be kept open for him. And James damns the place quietly, and lets it go —as he would let go heaven for Nellie. He nurses the child as a woman might. Or, perhaps, as no woman could. He is profoundly ignorant of disease. It is to be feared that he is at times profoundly foolish. The child loses strength every day before his eyes. The delirium and fever fight fiercely for her weakly life. It is her father's part to watch a struggle in which he can do nothing, and his rugged face gets haggard and ghostly. Nellie lives—so far as she can be said to be living at all—upon milk and brandy; and one day, the first for a fortnight, James leaves her in charge of 'Liza. He walks over to the doctor. A rapid walk, full of purpose, during which he takes no heed of anything by the way. He implores the doctor—a request which, is, somehow, pathetically ignorant and ridiculous—to let Nellie have something solid to eat.

'"'Liza could do a beefsteak very tender,' he says. And there is a look so miserable and desperate in the man's face that the doctor does not even feel like smiling.

It takes more than medical assurance to convince James that Nellie wants anything but 'strengthening up.' He arrives at the surgery at all sorts of unseemly hours of the night and day to reiterate his request. He has the dogged persistence of a great ignorance and a great love. If there can be any pathos in connection with a beefsteak—which is manifestly impossible—James puts it there.

The delirium leaves Nellie one twilight, and the father fancies as he watches her that she knows he is near. He sits by her all through the sultry night. The little house is very quiet indeed, the voluble 'Liza having gone to sleep downstairs. Before dawn Nellie stirs a little, and smiles as if her dreams were happy. Her poor little life goes out quietly with the stars, and her father is roused from a broken sleep by the chill of the wasted hand lying in his own.

In a few days 'Liza has already begun to derive a good deal of consolation from some deeply woeful mourning and the celebrity and glory imparted to her from being a near relation of a corpse. She enjoys a relish in the shape of a bloater, and a few friends to her tea, with a good deal of zest and any number of easy tears, while

James sits alone with Bulbs in front of him, reading it with a dogged sense of duty, and comprehending not a word.

James cannot derive any consolation from *his* friends—having only a very few, and at no time, even the happiest, treating them to confidence and conversation. Perhaps his grief is of that kind which words would not at all relieve. Perhaps, after all, it is much like the trouble of more highly cultivated persons, and he fears sympathy as one fears a touch upon an open wound.

He resumes his work, his master having repented of his hardness, or found that James is necessary to the place, or both. And James, having been at all times a very temperate person, puts by from his week's wages a modest allowance usually devoted to beer. He makes many other, if no greater, sacrifices for the same object. 'Liza talks of putting by something too towards Nellie's memorial stone. 'Liza says they must do something 'andsome by the child. It is characteristic of them both that 'Liza only talks and James only does.

James is deputed to choose the stone. There are tears in his eyes, perhaps, which obscure his sense of the beautiful—or he has no such sense at

all. Only wants Nellie—in 'Liza's phrase—to be done by 'andsome. Wants to show her, by spending a great deal of money that he can very ill afford, how dear she is to him, and how faithfully his heart keeps her memory. Perhaps he thinks —the uneducated have such ideas—that she looks down from some baby heaven and approves an erection which it must be confessed is unmitigatedly hideous and pagan. 'Liza takes a great deal of pride in pointing out the stone to her friends, in mentioning its price, and recalling the expenses of the funeral. But James is pleased only because Nellie will be pleased too. He goes often to contemplate the grave in the churchyard, and derives from its gloomy hideousness a comfort and easing of sorrow which he does not find elsewhere. Very plebeian and uneducated? Yes; but it may be that in its vast heart Providence takes account of griefs so simple, and itself provides for them these simple consolations.

Years after, when James still gardens grumpily, and despises Miss Laura's essays in horticulture with perfect good-humour and impoliteness, a small circumstance reveals that Nellie is still unforgotten.

'Drat this place!' says 'Liza, who is still

voluble and emphatic, and she votes that they retire upon their savings and end their days fashionably at Ramsgate.

James does not give any reason why this plan does not please him. Perhaps he thinks that reason is wasted upon women—particularly upon 'Liza. Perhaps his contempt of words and his habits of silence have deepened with time. And they have always been deep. Or perhaps he has no reason to urge—only a feeling. And anyone who thinks that James would ever urge his feelings can know nothing at all about him.

But when 'Liza can swear it's because he won't leave our Nellie, who has been a corpse these ten years, there is no knowing that she may not be right.

## *THE PRACTICAL WOMAN*

'Il n'y a guère de femme assez habile pour connaître tout le mal qu'elle fait'

At an early age Nora fixes her calm and discerning eye on a wholly eligible young man. The fact that he is comfortably off and has excellent prospects has, of course, nothing to do with her regard for him. Love is, we know, superior to these things.

But, as Nora often remarks, Love is not superior to the tradespeople, who must always be taken into consideration when one is deciding where to place one's young affections.

There is no silly sentimentality about Nora. She is pre-eminently a girl who will make an excellent wife. On the very first evening she is engaged she produces a large note-book and a foot-rule. In the note-book she makes a list of the utensils which will be required for her new kitchen, and asks Arthur if he really thinks a cook can possibly require more than six saucepans.

Arthur says, 'Don't bother about saucepans yet awhile,' and begins to be immensely sentimental. Arthur is sentimental. There is no doubt about it. Nora raises a face wholly pretty and good-tempered, and gives Arthur a little peck on the cheek, shakes her head at his foolishness, with an engaging smile, and returns to the saucepans. Afterwards she measures carpets with the foot-rule, and is just a trifle vexed with Arthur that he cannot remember if his drawing-room is 12 feet by 8 or 12 feet by 10.

It is delightful to see a girl so thoroughly practical and sensible, especially when one remembers what fools most people make of themselves when they are engaged to be married. Nor can it possibly be supposed that Nora is not rather fond of Arthur. It is one's duty to care for the man one is going to marry, and Nora's sense of duty is immense. Her feelings are always regulated by principle; and they never run away with her, as Arthur's do, for instance.

'I cannot say,' says Nora to a girl friend, with that delightful candour which is part of her attraction, 'that I am devotedly in love with Arthur. In fact, I should say that if Mr. Morton had proposed to me, as I expected he would have done, I

should have married him in preference. But Arthur is very good and right-minded, and is always at church on Sunday, which is more than one can say of Mr. Morton. Therefore I am sure everything is ordered for the best.'

The engagement is not a long one, but long enough for Nora, in company with the note-book and Arthur, to choose the furniture in a particularly competent, shrewd, and business-like manner. They meet other couples doing the same thing. These, perhaps, blinded with love, may take painted deal for oak, and the latest imitation for the genuine antique. But not so Nora.

Arthur trots behind her, and when he has a chance—and he very seldom has—murmurs soft nothings in her ear. Nora receives them with admirable good temper.

'But because we are in love,' she says, with a very pretty smile, 'there is no reason why we should be cheated.'

Which, indeed, is perfectly true.

Nora is a very pretty bride. Other girls have been seen on the auspicious day flushed with excitement or pale with nervousness, or even with noses reddened from weeping. But Nora is charmingly calm and collected.

They have a delightful wedding trip, of course. Where is the person who has not had a delightful wedding trip? Then they settle down, and the cook is comfortably established with her six saucepans. Nora is a wife for whom any man ought to be thankful. She feeds Arthur with great judiciousness. She institutes a daily reading of the Scriptures aloud for his benefit.

'By Jove!' says Arthur weakly—he is a weak person—'can't I be trusted to read them to myself?'

Nora replies, with her usual clear good sense and a highly principled face, that it is a great deal better he should read them with her, because then she has certainty to go upon, and not trust. Which is eminently more satisfactory.

She manages him very well. She is fond of him, of course, but does not allow him to be maudlinly sentimental.

'Dear Arthur,' she says, with her prettiest smile, 'of course I like you. It is my duty. But I don't mean to say that if you were to die I should not most likely marry again—that is, of course, after a decent interval.'

'Thank you for the interval,' says Arthur. Perhaps he thinks he is sarcastic. But Nora very

properly takes him quite seriously, and says that if there were no interval people would talk.

She is full of kindness and deeds of mercy. She discovers a little Mrs. Jones, with an income of one hundred pounds per annum and a great number of children. Nora decides, in her competent and business-like way, that the colonies are the place for Mrs. Jones. Therefore she proceeds to arrange for the emigration, and makes outfits for the emigrants. During this time Arthur hardly ever sees her. He would be a selfish beast if he complained. But he is a selfish beast, and he does complain.

On which Nora says, 'Now, dear, how would *you* like to have one hundred a year, ten children, and no prospects? You should consider other people a little.'

And Arthur is duly crushed.

Mrs. Jones is so overcome with all the kindnesses she receives from Nora that, one day, being an overwrought and emotional person, she throws her arms round her benefactress's neck and kisses her, with deplorably weak tears.

Nora dries the tears carefully from her dress, which is a new one—and Nora is always economical—and looks at Mrs. Jones with an amused little

smile—the best thing for Mrs. Jones, undoubtedly, for it has the effect of chilling her emotions a little and making her recover herself quickly.

'John,' says Mrs. Jones to a worn and harassed husband that evening, 'if Nora were not without a heart at all she would be the kindest-hearted person in the world.'

A ridiculous remark. But Mrs. Jones is a ridiculous little person.

Nora, it is very true, has a better foundation for her good deeds than mere feeling and impulse. She is a mass of Principle. Some weak persons are loving and sympathetic because they feel so. A poor reason indeed. They remove suffering because it hurts them to see it; which is plainly pure selfishness. But Nora has never done a good deed—and her good deeds are many—which was not prompted solely by duty.

'Dash your duty!' Arthur has once said. 'Dash your duty! If that's the only reason you care about me I'd rather you didn't do it at all.'

Nora very properly first reprimands Arthur for his strong language—it is such bad taste—and then says she is sure he would not be so cross and discontented without some reason, and is afraid

must be his liver. She doctors him, therefore, indefatigably for that organ—Eno's fruit salt and Beecham's pills.

But his liver never seems to be completely cured.

One day an infant appears upon the scene. It is an interruption. Any one who has work—charitable work, too—upon their hands, as Nora has, would feel the same thing. The secretaryship of the Amalgamated Shop Girls, a district of costermongers, a cutting-out class, and a golf club—all have to go to the wall for it.

It is not even a pretty infant. It is purple in colour; and its nose turns up in the air and is red at the tip. It is a chilly and disconsolate-looking baby, in fact. And yet, though Nora cannot pretend to find it interesting, as some weak-minded mammas have been known to find equally dull specimens, it is beautifully brought up—on Principle, and on a System.

The System involves bracing and much open air; fogs and east winds useful for their hardening properties. Crying not allowed by the Principle. The house not turned topsy-turvy because of the infant's presence therein. From the first moment of its existence it is brought up on a prearranged

plan—a plan absolutely infallible, and not admitting of modification.

Nora may not—indeed, does not—crow and make a fool of herself over the baby, as many mothers do. But it has the best of everything—hygienic clothing, and a nurse who does not dare to rebel (openly at least) against the System.

When Nora returns to her good works she by no means, as so many might, neglects the baby for them. The baby has been Sent. It is her duty. She visits the nursery, therefore, several times a day between other engagements, and sees that the System is carried out. She moves the cradle with the toe of her boot, and looks at the infant proudly, of course, but perhaps a trifle critically. She feels a slight and very natural annoyance that it is plainer than other persons' babies, and then hastens off, full of duty, to the cutting-out class.

Arthur is weak over that infant; for a man, deplorably weak. Once, indeed, Nora finds him kneeling by the cradle with one of the baby's ridiculous hands grasping his finger. He really looks most idiotic. When Nora sees him she looks in his face and laughs; not maliciously, or as if she were displeased—only a laugh of amusement. But it causes him to drop the ridiculous hand and feel

as if he had made a fool of himself; which shows how a little good-humoured ridicule may cure a man of his worst failings.

One night the infant is taken suddenly ill. It has, indeed, been systematised the day before in a north-east gale, and, being a misconstructed infant, instead of benefiting by a *régime*, is dying of it.

Nora is admirably calm and collected. While another mother—Mrs. Jones, for instance—would be agitated into putting the baby into an ipecacuanha bath and pouring hot water down its throat, with a delightful composure and common sense Nora is reading a medical book to see what ought to be done under the circumstances.

'Confound that book!' says Arthur, who has come very interferingly into the nursery in an exceedingly impromptu costume. 'It is too late to begin learning *now* what you ought to do. I should have thought instinct would have taught you something of the way to manage it.'

'I have never heard,' says Nora, with a perfectly good-tempered smile, 'that instinct instructs any one in the science of medicine; but it is certainly to be wished that it did.'

The baby lies on her lap, and they wait thus for the doctor. The nurse stands by sobbing. Sobs

are so useful. But the nurse is plebeian and emotional. Arthur watches the child with a face suddenly grown haggard. He is not plebeian; but he is emotional, it seems.

Before morning the frail life goes out with a sigh, and the plebeian nurse is carried away in hysterics.

The parents leave the nursery with the doctor.

'What was the cause of death?' asks Arthur in an odd voice.

'The System,' answers the doctor. He looks at Nora. He does not spare her. He need not. If there is a shadow on her pretty face it is a very faint one.

'It answers with most babies,' she replies.

And the doctor says, 'If you have another child, madam, try a little more love and a little less System. Believe me, that will answer better.'

Then he leaves them alone.

For awhile they stand in silence.

'We must try,' says Nora, laying a hand on Arthur's shoulder, 'to be resigned. Of course, it is very sad, but it is Sent.'

Arthur is usually a weak man, Heaven knows. But he turns upon her now, his eyes burning with some strong passion.

'Confound you!' he says; 'confound your systems, and your resignation, and your religion—confound them all!'

The quarrel, if quarrel it can be called, is made up, of course. Quarrels are so wrong. And Arthur apologises for swearing. Swearing is so dreadful. And soon there is another baby, who really does just as well as the first. And Nora is as bright and good-tempered and sensible as ever; and Arthur is perfectly satisfied, of course, except when his liver is wrong; and that, as everyone knows, makes anyone take a discontented view of life and think things are not as satisfactory as they might be.

## *THE SQUIRE*

'Il n'y a pour l'homme qu'un vrai malheur, c'est d'avoir quelque chose à se reprocher'

He is fine, fresh-coloured, upright, and over seventy years old. The old gaffers in the village remember him in his youth as the straightest rider in the county. 'Our Squire was a game 'un,' says one of them, with a twinkle in his ancient eye. He is, for that matter, game still. He drives even now twenty miles to the Derby, in a sporting coat with a rose in his button-hole and a fine expectation of enjoyment on his brave old face. There is still about him a certain freshness, keenness, and vigour very pleasant to see. He is yet as good a judge of a horse as any man in the neighbourhood. He has organised and presides over the village cricket team, and is proud that his eleven should be the terror of other persons' elevens for miles round.

The Squire lives in a great stone house, which has been in his family for many generations. His estate and his tenants are admirably looked after.

The villagers always follow his stalwart, solitary old figure, with the comment that 'he do bear up wonderful'

He walks over his property, with a fine elastic tread that is almost youthful, every day except Sundays. His people are a little afraid and infinitely fond of him. To his servants he is perfectly just, strict, and kind. There is not one of them who would dare to neglect his duty, nor one who is not certain of finding in his master a great justice and liberality.

His charity is as little abused, perhaps, as any man's. Even the people to whom he gives speak well of him. The little village girls, after a fine simple old custom, drop him the profoundest of courtesies. He knows nearly every one of them by name—has known by name their parents and grandparents before them. He walks regularly with his family, rather slowly and with a good deal of dignity, to church every Sunday morning. The gaffers, remembering his wild youth, wink at each other sometimes as he passes thus. But, indeed, even his wildness has been characterised by a blameless honour and generosity, and there is no man to-day who can remember against him anything unworthy of an upright and honest gentleman.

The Squire is sprucely dressed upon all occasions. On Sundays particularly he recalls to one's mind the dandyism of his youth. He always has a

flower in his coat, and his grey felt hat is perfectly trim and well brushed. Upon Sunday, too, he wears gloves, and has a fine solemn air with him, which of itself almost makes one feel Sabbatical.

He reads the lessons in church with perfect conviction and simplicity. 'He do do it beautiful!' says Granny, who is deaf, and has not heard a word. But his reverent old face and fine devout air impress her, perhaps, as they impress many other simple people. The Squire says his prayers in a sitting posture, with one hand hiding his face. One can distinguish his deep 'Amen' among the rustic responses. He does not turn to the east at the creed to gratify the prejudices of an enlightened youthful vicar. He is quite conservative and narrow-minded. His feelings are a great deal hurt and wounded when singing is introduced where saying has been the fashion ever since he can remember. His religion, indeed, is so perfectly simple and faithful and behind the times that it seems very little different from the childish religion he learnt—Heaven knows how many long years ago—at his mother's knee. Perhaps it is not different at all, and in this brave old heart the simple, tender little ideas of a simple little mother still live and bear fruit a hundredfold.

The Squire is, as he should be, the hottest of Tories. The little village constitutes an absurd little branch of the Primrose League. The Squire gives the Primrose League two suppers and a series of village entertainments every year to keep up its political energy. He addresses it with a great deal of vigorous simplicity, which suits it admirably. Perhaps his arguments are not very good. It is not an argument at all, very likely, to say that Mr. Gladstone is a double-dyed villain. But in this case the statement does as well or a great deal better than an argument. The first article in the village political creed is to believe what the Squire says. And indeed, in many things, the village might do worse.

After the politics the Squire's daughters, who are plain, kindly, and middle-aged, play duets, the Vicar's wife sings one of her three little songs, and the Squire reads an extract out of Dickens. The Squire is not a literary man in a general way. He believes in the Bible and Sir Walter Scott, and sometimes in the mellow, lamp-lit evenings he takes his Byron and re-reads some of those wild love lyrics which in his youth, at a certain romantic time, he very likely knew by heart. He looks up from the book sometimes, with very kindly old

eyes, at Madame sitting opposite to him. Madame is still upright, and handsome in spite of grey hairs and wrinkles. The world finds her, indeed, a little too quiet and dignified for its liking.

And the Squire says, with a smile half tender, half humorous, 'Do you remember this, Mary?' and reads her a line or two in some such voice as he reads the Song of Solomon in church.

And the faintest delicate colour starts in Madame's old cheeks, and there is a little soft droop about her lips, and she remembers it—very well indeed.

The Squire is quite devoted to Madame. Perhaps to him she is still bright-eyed and one-and-twenty. Or perhaps he thinks that seventy-two is the most charming and becoming age in the world. The old couple are still quite enterprising. Now the children are well advanced in middle life Madame feels she may safely leave them—for a few weeks, that is—to themselves. So every autumn the old pair take a trip abroad. The Squire's attitude towards Madame is quite chivalrous and protecting and considerate. He studies Murray and Baedeker through his gold-rimmed spectacles, and tells Madame, who is horribly submissive and old-fashioned, where it

will be best for them to go next. The Squire speaks languages in the perfectly precise and grammatical manner in which he learnt them in his youth, and which considerably astonishes the natives. Madame does a great deal of standing-by and following her husband. She was young when such an attitude was common to all women. She is not learned. She is not at all ambitious. She is quite loving and simple. She knows very well how to manage a house. She is very proud of her table linen and her china. She used to be fearfully and wonderfully learned with her babies. She is ever so little shy and chilling in her intercourse with strangers, and is devoted to her husband with all the depth and strength of her faithful heart.

The Squire is pre-eminently the master in his own house. To Madame he is master also, but a master how infinitely kind, loving, just, and tender only Madame knows. He reads Prayers—a solemn chapter out of the Bible and a long supplication compiled by a prosy old bishop—at eight o'clock every morning. Madame kneels by his side, with grey bent head and devout, folded hands. After breakfast the Squire leaves her to her household duties and takes a ride. His costume is admirably correct and youthful. His fine fresh-coloured old

face glows with the exercise. He is still 'game' enough to occasionally drive four-in-hand. To be complimented as the best whip in the county causes his honest, dignified old face to redden pleasantly with pride. In the afternoons he watches the cricket or his daughters playing tennis. 'A fine game,' he says. 'A very fine game.' He thinks all games fine almost, and those in which horse-flesh can be introduced the finest of all. He would play tennis himself only Madame is anxious about his heart, and when he handles a racquet comes into the garden with a face so appealing and distressed as to cause him to desist immediately.

But after all it is Madame herself who first goes the way of all flesh. She dies very quietly indeed. The Squire is by her bedside, and holds her feeble fingers to the last in his strong old hand.

'We have been very happy, my dear,' says the wife.

'Ay, ay, Mary. God has been very good,' answers the Squire in his simple fashion. The daughters, who have known the devotion which the old couple have borne to each other, are surprised at their father's steady courage and composure when the end comes.

'You must take comfort,' says the Vicar.

'I have taken it,' says the Squire. 'I am not far from eighty years old. I shall not be long without her.'

At the funeral in the little churchyard, surrounded by his children and by the poor people who have received a thousand tender charities from the dead woman, the Squire's fine old face stands out with a great courage and serenity against the wintry sky.

Afterwards, when he has reached home, he goes to the stable and gives some orders about Madame's pony. 'Don't work her any more,' he says to the groom. 'Let Nellie enjoy herself. Her mistress would have wished it.' And Nellie answers him with a neigh, and rubs her old nose against his black coat. When he gets back to his library he writes in a firm old hand to beg that the village football match may not be postponed on account of 'my great loss.'

And for the first time the full extent of that loss comes upon him.

In the short winter twilight his eldest daughter, who is a plain, homely little woman, with a great loving heart, finds him sitting, with bent head and dreary eyes, looking into a lifeless fire.

'Will you come to tea, father?' she says softly. 'We are waiting for you.'

'Presently, presently,' he answers in an old voice.

Above him is a picture of Madame at three-and-twenty years old, sweet, bright, and blushing. He remembers her to-night just as she was then. He recalls the beautiful, rapt maternity upon her face as she bent over the first of their children. The child died a baby. It comforts the Squire's brave, simple old heart to think that the two are together to-night. He goes back in fancy, no doubt, as he sits in the darkening room beneath her picture, to a thousand trivial incidents of their quiet married life. They have been very happy. There have been troubles, indeed, but they have shared them. There has been the poor old human need for forbearance. He thinks to-night that such a need made them care for each other not less, but more. If his memories are sad, as at such a time they must needs be, they are not bitter at all. He has been blessed, is still blessed, above other men. When he joins his daughters, a sad little party in the lamp-lit drawing-room, there is a courage and even a certain hope and cheerfulness upon his rugged face.

Such a courage and cheerfulness mark all his

life afterward. He shoots pheasants in the autumn in the home coverts as he used to do, and appears to enjoy the sport as he has always enjoyed it. He takes the same interest in the horses and dogs and the farming. The estate is as carefully looked after as ever. 'But he thinks on her,' says Granny. 'He thinks on her all the time.' Granny is right, perhaps, though she has only the wisdom of the simple. The Squire is very particular that none of Madame's charities should be neglected. He himself audits the modest accounts of her Clothing Club. He desires that one of his daughters shall distribute, in her place, simple remedies for the poor old people's aches and pains. He likes still that the house shall be cheerful, and to see happy faces about him. He does not very often talk of the dead wife. It is his habit, instead, to do as she would wish. His children are startled sometimes to see how faithfully her smallest desires are remembered and obeyed. By a tacit consent her place by the Squire's side in church is always left vacant. But, except this, his fashion of mourning her is almost wholly practical. He calls in sometimes in the afternoon to chat with a certain small farmer whom Madame, in her fine goodness and innocence, thought she was going to reclaim

from habits of inebriation. He takes out her great retriever every day for a long walk, Madame having had a theory that Don's internal arrangements required an abnormal amount of exercise.

One of his daughters tells the story long after, smiling, and with tender tears in her eyes, how he even wears the warmest and scrubbiest of underclothing during the winter, in accordance with one of the dead Madame's fond and anxious wishes.

There are a thousand ways in which the brave old man is faithful to her memory. With his simple faith in the Unseen, he fancies that she looks down from some happy Heaven, and is glad, as she would have been on earth, to see him well, active, and, so far as may be, contented.

He is so to the end. To the end the brave old face has a cheery look for every man. To the end he is a fine, honest, sportsmanlike, God-fearing country gentleman. To the end he has a mind fresh, keen, active, a great love for his dogs and his horses, a great generosity, a great manliness. To the end he has a heart full of kindly and noble thoughts—with one most faithful and abiding memory.

And in that Place whither his works shall follow him he joins Madame at last.

## *THE BEAUTY*

La beauté trompe encore plus la personne qui la possède que ceux qui en sont éblouis'

Lena is seven-and-thirty years old. She is the best-dressed woman in London. 'And the best-looking,' she adds judicially and with the candour for which she is distinguished. She has a house in Park Lane. She has a villa at Florence of which she is immensely fond—when she is in England ; and a great estate in the Midlands which she always hates. She is of the world, worldly. She is so shallow and brilliant that one feels she ought to make a great name. She knows something about everything. She reads before she comes down in the morning during the prolonged rest she always takes for the benefit of her perfect complexion. She reads theology when theology is the fashion. She is a Buddhist one week and a Mahatma the next. An Agnostic pretty frequently. Agnosticism is so convenient. She talks over her beliefs with her admirers. There is a point and

audacity about her statements which make them infinitely more telling than if they were the soundest of arguments. No one argues with her, however. Her beauty, her perfect poses, her wit, her brilliancy, her fine sense of humour, her complete vanity and self-satisfaction make argument in some sense impossible. The laugh is always with her. To put her in the wrong is quite out of the question. 'She is so confoundedly clever, you know,' some one says of her. That is it. She is so confoundedly clever.

Her beauty is perfectly preserved. An excellent digestion and a heart and conscience which have given her no sort of trouble have contributed to this desirable result. 'I shall be thirty-eight next birthday,' she is in the habit of saying with the most delightful candour. 'And I should be constantly mistaken for my own daughter if I were not so very much better looking.' Her vanity is as transparent as that of a child admiring itself in a new frock in a looking-glass. It is, as it were, the weak point in a character that is otherwise strong. Lena will lap up greedily the most fulsome of compliments. There is no flattery too blunt for her ear. Her pride and her cleverness cringe to it. Her worship of her own beauty

would be ridiculous if it did not strike a note that reverberates in tragedy. To be lovely and admired has been the whole aim of her life. She has sacrificed her soul to it, and achieved it.

Lena was married at nineteen. 'I was the handsomest girl in London,' she says to her husband, looking at him with perfect scorn and good-humour down a table glittering with glass and silver. 'I might have married anybody. And I married you.'

Her husband does not answer. He seldom replies to Lena's innuendoes. He has a habit of sitting with his hands crossed behind his chair and his grey head a little bent. He is a fool, of course. What could he have been but a fool to think that Lena, brilliant and nineteen, could be marrying him for anything except his money? What can he be now but a fool to go on worshipping this woman who insults him a dozen times a day with her scornful good-humour and her cruel wit? The world—the world always knows—says he only has himself to blame for her treatment of him. The world scorns scarcely less than she does herself his slow patience and long-suffering, his persistent kindness and forbearance. 'My husband has no brains to speak of, you know,' says

Lena conversationally. Her husband can hear the remark from the other end of the table. 'He wrote a prize essay at Oxford,' she continues, enjoying herself very much. 'That speaks for itself.' Lena is wearing diamonds which this fool gave her a week ago. Her bad taste is sometimes so execrable that one wonders even society applauds her. 'It's a dreadful shame,' people say, and accept her invitations to dinner next month with perfect pleasure. But there is indeed something about Lena which leads the world, as well as her husband, to forgive her. It may be her wit, or her beauty, or her manner which makes some women and all men lose sight of, or care nothing for, the nature which they cover. Or it may be that even Lena is not so bad as she represents herself.

There is good in her. There is a certain impulse and a generosity which would be very good if they were not so exceedingly brief. There are days and moments when Lena is quite pleasant and civil to the man who has married her, and given her great wealth, great faithfulness, great affection. The day he brings her home the diamonds she is surprised into pleasure and gratitude. 'You can kiss me if you like,' she says. And he is fool enough to touch her cheek reverently with

his lips. She wears the diamonds all day for nearly a week. Her pleasure over them is like the pleasure of a child. She tries them first in this position and then in that. She looks at herself in all the mirrors in the drawing-room. They dine alone in the evening, and she is wholly gracious, and brilliant, and good-humoured. She has put on her very finest dress. She has made the maid do her hair a hundred times. 'Diamonds suit me exactly,' she says; 'and there isn't one woman in ten thousand who ought ever to put them on.' Her beauty is so rich and perfect one cannot believe she is nearly forty years old. When she is good-humoured, as she is to-night, she looks younger than ever. Her dress is inimitably chosen and suitable. She affects none of the airs of a very young woman. She is too confoundedly clever, you know, for that.

But the next day she is less gracious; and in a week is herself again.

Lena has a few occasional plain lady friends whom she loves passionately for a month and loathes for the rest of her life. She has admirers. Everyone admires her. She has so little heart that her only danger from their society lies in her most gullible vanity.

It is in society that she shines most. She is incomparably brilliant and amusing. She will question the theology of an archbishop with the easiest wit and audacity across a great dinner-table of persons who pause in their talk to listen to and look at her. She is the central figure everywhere she goes. Her candour and frankness are inimitable. Her vanity is of its kind perfect, and she is always comfortably assured that every man in the room is in love with her.

Then Sir George falls ill. The illness is alarming; it even alarms Lena. In the very middle of the season she goes down to the Midlands to nurse her husband. She puts on a very becoming cap and a delightful apron. She is for a time quite attentive and good-natured. She cheers the patient with the most deliciously scandalous and piquant stories which she has heard in town. The sick man always lies so that he can see her. She has done her best to break his heart, and he loves her still. The touch of her hand raises in him now a thousand tender emotions. She is still the one woman in the world for him. And she leaves him. The deadly dulness of the place and the monotony and depression of a sick room soon get intolerable. She has always been quite selfish. Admiration is

the breath of her life. And who is there to admire one here? She goes back to town, and a telegram informs her of his death.

She laments him and curses herself passionately for a few days. But there is the estate to see about, and one's black, and all sorts of things. It is a relief to her—it would be to any woman so placed—that a modern widow is not required to make herself wholly frightful. 'I am not sure that black is not more becoming to me than anything else,' she says. The fact affords her a great deal of consolation.

She soon resumes her usual mode of life. She is more admired than ever. She is a very rich widow indeed. Her style deteriorates, perhaps. But that does not matter. Her admirers are not too particular.

And then she falls ill herself. It is not a common illness; it does not affect her brain or incapacitate her body; it only destroys her beauty. She goes to the best physicians in London and abroad. She tries quackery. She spares herself no trouble or money. While she is going through treatment she shuts herself up in the great house in the Midlands. For a while she almost despairs. She reads a great many French novels, and tries desul-

torily, and with little of her former splendid vigour and brilliancy, a new religion. And she hears of a doctor, a great specialist for diseases of the skin, whom she has not yet seen. She flings aside the new religion and puts herself under his treatment. It is irksome always and sometimes painful; but she carries it out with a courage and resolution not ignoble. She suffers, and not a complaint passes her lips. She has never been a weak woman. She is not weak now. And her whole happiness and success in life are at stake.

One afternoon, when she has been sitting, bored to death, looking above her novel through the window at the dripping autumn garden, the great doctor is announced unexpectedly.

'Doctor!' she exclaims. 'How good of you to look me up! I should have gone melancholy mad if you hadn't come! This is the most hateful place in all England. How much will you give me for it?'

She has still her old vivacity and the manner of a beautiful woman. She is perfectly dressed, and in the creeping shadows of the November afternoon, with her face half hidden by her white hand, one might fancy her lovely still.

'I have been studying your case, madam,'

says the doctor. He is comparatively young and eager in his profession. He looks straight at Lena as he speaks.

'Well?' she says. She sits down at the tea-table, which is placed near the fire, and alters the position of some cups. The china clatters a little in her hands.

'It is not well, I fear,' he answers not easily and after awhile. 'I have come here for a purpose, madam. I have made up my mind—I think it right to tell you—that I can do nothing more for you. Your case is incurable.'

'It's a lie!' she cries suddenly. 'It's a lie!' And she turns upon him in a rage.

After a while he leaves her. She believes him. Perhaps she believed at first. The short twilight fades very quickly—the fire almost goes out. One last flame shows, haggard and terrible, the face which she used to say with some sort of justice was the most beautiful in London. A horror of great darkness covers her at last.

'If I were a woman in a book,' she whispers, 'I should kill myself; but in real life I shall go on living, and living—for ever.'

And her head falls upon her hands.

## *THE PEASANT*

'De tous les appuis le plus sûr est encore la force d'âme'

ANNA may be seventy years old. She has a face hard and strong and so wrinkled and furrowed that one cannot tell at all what a girlish Anna may have been like. She has a great, gaunt, bent, old figure like a man's, hands that have done the work of a man for years, and a nature which is celebrated rather for its stern enduring masculine properties than for any feminine softness at all.

Anna is not, it must be confessed, lovely to look at or meek to deal with. She is of Norfolk, and has the cool steady independence which is essentially of eastern England. Anna will look her visitor, be he king or beggar, full in the face, and with an unruffled composure which, if one met it in a duchess instead of an ugly old woman who works coarsely for her bread, one would say was the perfection of good-breeding. Anna is never surprised, or, as she would say herself, took aback,

The old woman, rocking Polly's baby to sleep

under any circumstances. She will turn round from swearing in a gruff voice and deeply at her farm boy, who is also her grandson, to bid the parson 'Good-morning' with an ease that has a kind of dignity in it, and with the finest unconsciousness of wrong-doing. No one indeed has ever attempted to teach Anna her duty—or, at least, has never made such an attempt twice. Once, it is true, the parson's gentle sister essays to point out to Anna that to treat Sunday with a sublime indifference and to work through it as if it were a week-day is morally wrong.

'Ay,' says Anna, quite unmoved, and looking her visitor very full and directly in the face, with a lean horny old hand resting on the table. 'That may be. Like enough. But if I don't do wrong Polly 'd starve. And I'll be damned first.'

If Anna had any time for religion, which she has not, she would be a Dissenter. She has no better reason to give for her predilections for schism than to say, with her usual calm directness, 'That may be all very true. But it's my way of thinking—same as yours is yours.' Which seems n a manner to clinch the argument.

Anna's husband, whom she regarded, and now makes no disguise of having regarded, as a fool,

has been dead many years. Anna's children, with one exception, have left that bleak Norfolk village and gone out into the world. For the exception Anna toils and will toil till the day of her death.

Polly is supposed by the neighbours, whispering among themselves, to be a little daft. They take very good care indeed that their whisper does not reach Anna, of whose steady, keen eyes, gruff old voice, and great, slow anger they are not a little in awe. Polly marries miserably, but on the wedding-day there is a certain dumb sort of triumph in Anna's manner. Men don't marry daft ones. It seems that the wedding should be a sort of proof, not to Anna, who has no self-deceptions, but to Anna's neighbours, that Polly is as sensible as any of them.

Eight years afterwards Anna, who has watched over the fortunes of her child like some grim and loving Providence, falls ill, during which illness Polly's husband takes the opportunity of deserting her, and leaves her, half-witted and wholly incompetent to meet the world, to fight it alone. Anna gets up from that bed of sickness cursing herself quite freely for having given way to an indisposition for the first time in her hard life. The neighbours notice a new sternness and resolution about her grey old

lips, which have been firm always, and there is a singular keenness and steadiness in her eyes.

From that time forth she devotes her old life and her fierce old energies to Polly and the hapless half-dozen babies with whom Polly has been left. Out of a meagre saving Anna buys a little farm, which she works at seventy years old unaided, unless her grandson of six can be looked on in the light of a help. She takes Polly and the babies to her own cottage, and toils for them fiercely, and yet contentedly, late and early, Sunday and week-day, always. She takes no holidays. She is ignorant of farm work, and learns it at threescore years and ten with astonishing patience, thoroughness, and sagacity. She goes out in all weathers. She wears always the same dun-coloured garments, half-feminine and half-masculine. Her furrowed and shrewd old face is always partially hidden in a great bonnet which may have been white once and is certainly white no longer. She has not a single affectation of manliness—having indeed neither the leisure nor disposition for affectations of any kind—and is yet more than half a man and doing a man's work with perfect simplicity and thoroughness. In quite a little while after she has purchased her farm the live-stock

dealers become aware that they have to deal with an old woman who can drive a bargain better than any of her sons, and who can tell the points of a horse with exceeding shrewdness and accuracy. Anna may be heard swearing at her pigs and chickens in a great, gruff, friendly fashion in the early mornings and at night, or met trudging the eight miles to market, with her old eyes, under the disreputable bonnet, getting even a little brighter and keener than usual over the prospect of sharp business in the future.

She is everywhere spoken of as honest. She has certainly not derived a code of morals from the Church, which she doesn't believe in, or from the chapel, which she doesn't attend, but has, perhaps, drawn up one unconsciously for herself, and made it uncommonly short, simple, and sincere.

The gentry to whom she regularly sells the farm produce are a little afraid of a person so direct and uncompromising. Anna, indeed, is the woman of one idea—which is Polly—and has no time or inclination for social amenities at all. The neighbour who joins her when she is driving her pigs in to market is not a little rebuffed in her gossip by a person who is entirely intent on the

business in hand, and whose answers and dictums are perfectly gruff, shrewd, and to the point. It is thought, and said, by the Squire's lady, who attempts to interest Anna in the outside world, that the old woman is invincibly ignorant and narrow. When she is told, with some effusion and a desire to make her realise the importance of the event, of the birth of a prince, her old eyes rest wistfully for a moment on the smallest and forlornest of Polly's babies, and she can't be brought to say anything more enthusiastic than that it's to be hoped he'll be brought up godly.

She is, in fact, as is said, narrow. Her staunch old life has but one interest, and anything which does not touch that does not touch her. For a feeble Polly at home she works ceaselessly her rheumatic old limbs and her weary old brain. Because of Polly she has no time for the talkings and tea-drinkings which alleviate other old lives, perhaps. For Polly her business instincts must be ever shrewd and on the alert. Because of Polly she must toil always and rest never—must be, if you will, narrow, concentrated, money-grubbing, and, as it is often said, wholly unfeminine; though that she is unfeminine in the sense in which an idle woman shrieking for her rights on a

platform, or an hysterical one blaspheming for them in a novel, is unfeminine, will scarcely be thought. The only right Anna wants is, in fact, to keep Polly. She does the work of a man, because if she did not Polly would starve. She has lived among men, and become in some sort of them, because she must. Even if it had been in her nature to be tender, clinging, and simple, her circumstances would have denied her the indulgence of those old-fashioned qualities. She has the coarseness of a man because she has done the work of a man, and is infected with his roughness as well as with his strength and purpose.

Yet even Anna—towards Polly and Polly's babies only—has some of the dearer and softer virtues which make a woman. When she goes home in the dusk she will tend Polly's babies, especially the smallest of all, whom she thinks lovely, with her hard old face tender and her rough hands gentle.

She encourages this infant—a sad infant, with some of Polly's daftness on its poor little vacant face—to walk, or lift itself up with the assistance of a great finger, and calling it all the time by a number of names and in terms which shock delicate persons, but mean love not the less. Towards

Polly herself Anna is always in a coarse fashion gentle, and strongly patient. Though she will allow no one else to suggest to her that Polly's brain power is not so great as it should be, that she accepts the fact is evident, if only by the way in which, worn out with hard work herself at night, she will do Polly's work for her without a word of rebuke. Sometimes in the dusk when Polly falls stupidly asleep, with her pretty, foolish head on her folded arms on the table, the old woman, rocking Polly's baby to sleep on her shrivelled breast, looks at Polly with eyes full of yearning and pity; wakes her up at last with a great gentleness; helps to put her to bed, smoothing the pretty hair with a sad pride and old rough fingers; and stands for a moment looking at this girl, who has been a burden and sorrow all her life, asleep in the poor bed, a child on either side of her, with shrewd old eyes that are dim with something that is not wholly tenderness or pain or affection, and yet partakes of them all. Anna is up the next morning long before Polly is stirring, and may be heard swearing at the animals and the grandson farm boy, of whom she is infinitely fond, in the first dawn.

One day Anna is taken ill. She says nothing

about it. There is no one to say anything to. Polly has herself weakly health as well as a weakly intellect, and has the children to see to as best she can. A doctor is out of the question when one lives as hard as Anna has lived all her life. So she goes to work as usual, and as she must. There comes a day when her gruff old voice, shouting, and, it is to be feared, cursing about the farm, is weaker than usual. There is a sort of mist before her keen eyes, and she has a feeling creeping into her heart as if nothing mattered very much, and would soon cease to matter at all. She gets a little brandy from the inn. Having been sternly abstemious all her life, it revives her for a while. She puts the farm in careful order. She gives a few instructions to her little grandson, who looks up bewildered into her grey old face. She sits down in the stable at last, with her trembling lips moving in a vague prayer. She has not prayed much hitherto, unless to work is to pray, as some think. 'Polly won't be able to keep up the farm,' she says faintly; 'Polly's too daft.' She prays God to see to that helpless creature and those helpless children when this thing which she feels coming upon her has come.

'It'll be the Union,' she says; 'I could only

keep them out of it a little while.' She murmurs over the verse of a hymn—a hymn ending 'Glory, glory,' and entirely inappropriate and unsuitable—which they used to sing at chapel in the far-off days when she had time to go there. After that she knows nothing. The little grandson, finding her presently, runs crying for help, and two labourers lift this poor old dying creature on a board and carry her towards home. She does not know who they are. She has forgotten most things. She has ceased to care for almost everything but one thing, and only gasps to them before she dies not to take her home—dead—to Polly—lest Polly should 'take on.'

A heroine? A martyr to a cause? Why, no. Only a coarse, ugly old creature, who expiates the crime of bringing a daft Polly into the world by working and dying for her. Only that, after all.

## *THE FRENCHMAN*

'La gaîté est près de la bonté'

Jean is perhaps five-and-thirty years old. Jean has a little moustache waxed carefully at the ends, a little intellect uncommonly quick and bright, and a manner into which are condensed the most perfect good-humour, cheeriness, politeness, *obligeance* and *savoir-faire* in the world. Jean owns, in fact, a number of charming characteristics for which synonyms are not to be found either in the English language or nation. He has a *verve* and *aplomb* quite unlimited. He dramatises his words by an action of the hands, face, and shoulders entirely expressive. He is as free from self-consciousness as an infant. He wears, with a delight that is perfectly fresh and youthful, collars and cuffs which have Frenchman stamped all over them, and ties his ties in a little bow the jauntiness of which no Englishman has ever accomplished or, perhaps, essayed.

Jean is from Paris. He is not, as he would say himself with a perfect freedom from embarrassment, of the high world. Jean's papa, whom he speaks of even now with tears in his quick and emotional eyes, was in fact an obscure clerk in an obscure office on the Boulevards. Jean himself lives in London, and having a very little voice, a great sense of music, and an infinite amount of what his earliest patroness calls *chic*, as if it were a substantive, sings comic songs in his own language at the 'At Homes' of great persons in London.

Jean is by way of being a success. He sings, and, if it may be so said, makes a fool of himself with an *abandon* which pleases greatly a solid British audience, that has never and could never so abandon itself for a second. Jean uses a thousand gestures—from Paris. He gives one the impression of being entirely carried away on the swing and rhythm of his song and music. He is undaunted always by the adversities of any circumstances in which he may find himself. And that he often finds himself at the fashionable party in circumstances uncommonly trying to his art and to his temper will not be doubted.

Jean makes a little way for himself to the piano through the rudest crowd in the world, a crowd of

well-dressed English women, with an infinite patience, politeness, and sweet temper. Jean receives the elbows of the modern Amazonian daughter in his eye, with a murmur of apology in his own courteous language on his lips. Jean, who has the misfortune to understand English perfectly, though he can only speak it a little, listens to a thousand perfectly candid expressions of opinion on himself. It dawns upon him, quite early in his modest career, that his audience do not for the most part understand a word of what he sings.

'When I come to 'Yde Park in my song,' he says in confidence and the very worst English to an elderly and cynical guest who is leaning against a mantelpiece, yawning, 'they laugh—'ow they laugh! And there is no joke there—none.'

'It's the first word they've understood, you know,' says the cynic. And Jean lifts his shoulders with a resigned smile and a sigh.

He perceives, with his gay little sense of humour pleasantly tickled, that many persons are shocked at his innocent airs, on the principle that whatever is French is also necessarily improper, while others, the 'new English mees,' for instance, are pleased in the delusion that they are listening to something *risqué* and music-hall. Jean bears,

with his gay equanimity quite undisturbed, the stony, unsmiling stare of the despondent British *milor'* who has been towed to the party by a fashionable wife, and is full of pessimism and longings for his study and a newspaper.

'But yes,' says Jean, with a shrug. 'It is easier when you smile. You do not smile much, you English. I do not do it for pleasure, you understand. I am—how do you call it?—mercenary. It is for Marie, and little Jules and Bébé.'

Marie is Jean's wife, a young wife still, who takes her part in the performance by playing Jean's accompaniments and smiling a little at the jokes which she has heard a thousand times, and at Jean. Jean, whose good temper has never been shaken by the rudeness of servants, the meanness of employers, the candour of audiences, and the sips of sweet lemonade which are spoken of by the hostess as 'refreshment,' has a quick rage storming in his breast when an English madam suggests as delicately as she can to Marie that Marie should dress, for professional purposes, in a style more gay and French. Jean thinks Marie quite lovely always. Loveliest of all, perhaps, in that very old black frock which he bought with her in Paris in a brief honeymoon time of prosperity. He thinks Marie looks her

best with her dark hair disordered by the clutches of Bébé, with the little flush that comes into her cheeks after a vivacious game on the floor with Jules. It is Marie herself who perceives that madam is right, who soothes Jean's indignation with a small, brown hand laid appealingly on his gay waistcoat, who reminds him that little indignities mustn't matter when one has to think of the children, and who makes herself, out of the cheapest materials, a fine little gown and bonnet, bright with a contrast of colours such as only a Frenchwoman dares to attempt.

The little couple are poor indeed, even when Jean becomes among a select coterie in some degree fashionable, but they are as happy, perhaps, as any two people in the world. They trudge cheerfully from Pimlico, where they lodge obscurely, to some fine house in the West End. Jean tucks Marie's slight hand under his arm. He treats her with a politeness which is not only of the manner, but of the heart. He is attached to her with that generous, impulsive, demonstrative affection which is just a little ridiculous, and most true. Marie, indeed, is not amused, but touched, when Jean, with a spontaneous action which is wholly natural, lays his hand on his heart, and bursts out into a quick

French torrent of warm words. They have been married six years, and have still for each other, in some sort, the feeling of lovers. Madam, in fact, their early patroness, who has herself been a long while prosily married to a great deal of money, suspects them for some time of being bride and bridegroom, and, when she learns of her mistake by accident, says, 'Aren't these French people *extraordinary*?' and gives them up, as it were, in despair.

Jean adds to domestic affection an infinite and blithe contentment. He has an air of enjoying himself at the parties he attends professionally which is quite inspiriting. He takes a cup of tepid tea beforehand with quite a blithe smile, and by way of raising his spirits to the requisite pitch of hilarity necessary to his entertainments. When the party is over he buttons himself cheerfully into a tight overcoat, wraps up Marie in her shawls, and the pair go out into the winter night, talking and gay. They slip through the carriages waiting for the guests and take the last omnibus to Pimlico. Jean's good-humour does not desert him even in this abominable vehicle when he is sat on by the two stout women who apparently live in omnibuses, or when his boots, which are small and patent leather

and of which he is a little bit proud, are crushed by the heavy feet of the vulgar.

For Marie's sake, indeed, he would like to ride in a carriage. Towards her his feelings are infinitely chivalrous, tender and protecting. For himself, he is not particular. Perhaps because he has not been brought up with the more fastidious tastes of a higher class. Or, perhaps, because he is by nature gay, unselfish, and well contented to take things as they are.

Jean is glad when his performances take place in the afternoon. Then, when he and Marie come home, they can have a game with the children. Jean lacks, it may be, many of those stout, solid, durable virtues of which Englishmen are proud, but he is at least domestic to a fault. After the game Jean smokes meditatively. The room is only the usual room of a second-rate English lodging-house, abominable with antimacassars, artificial flowers, and oleographs, but it makes a pretty picture with Jules of four, in a frock, playing on the floor, and Marie, in her old gown and the pretty disorder in her hair, walking up and down and singing, in a little voice that would be of no use at all professionally, to the baby on her shoulder. When she has put the children to bed, and she and

Jean have had coffee such as the British servant never made, Jean comes to the little fire where Marie is standing and puts his impulsive arm round her waist. He says a number of things to her which do not bear translation ; which are ridiculous even in French, perhaps ; or in any language ; though Marie does not think so.

They practise Jean's new songs afterwards, to Marie's accompaniment on a lamentable hired piano. Jean makes his grimaces and expressive actions of hand and shoulders quite faithfully. He overhears once someone say at one of his parties that to make a buffoon of yourself is, from a cultured point of view, possibly one of the lowest means of making a livelihood extant. Is it ? Well, perhaps. The remark strikes a little chill at the time even into Jean's brave and cheery soul. But, after all, what would you ? To earn a livelihood commonly is better, when one has Marie and the children to think of, than not to earn it at all. The end justifies the means, perhaps. And if one can be a clown and buffoon, and yet gay, honest, sober, and self-respecting, Jean is no doubt the person who accomplishes that difficult feat.

The last news of the little party is, however, that

Marie's uncle has left them some money, enough and not too much for wants so quiet and domestic; that Jean thinks of giving up his occupation, and returning with Marie, Jules, and Bébé to that heaven which is called Paris.

And Monsieur, leaning on his spade, and looking into her bright face with his kindly old eyes, says, 'Yes, Mademoiselle,—perhaps'

## *THE SCHOOLGIRL*

'Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, ma dame ;
Las ! le temps non : mais nous nous en allons '

Joyce has brown curls tied with a ribbon. She has a face all laughter and dimples. She is fifteen years old, and the happiest creature in creation.

Joyce does not learn very much. She has, indeed, come to school with the express purpose of learning as little as she can. She comes down to practise Beethoven perfectly blithe and contented at seven o'clock on a winter's morning. She murders that master with a gaiety of soul quite unconquerable. She glides from the sonata in G to the irresistible air of the last coster song. She commits this and all her other misdemeanours in such a manner that they are invariably found out.

Before an examination she may be seen endeavouring with astonishing hopefulness and a gay smile to learn propositions of Euclid by heart.

Her fingers are always covered with ink, and the ridiculous curls fall over her French exercises and blot them.

She is lectured to by a University Extended gentleman, and draws little caricatures of him upon her blotting-paper all the time. She astonishes the examiners at the Viva Voce at the end of the term with the singular ignorance and vivacity of her replies. When she is reproached by Intellecta of Girton for her terrible frivolity at the mathematical class, Joyce puts her impulsive arms round that learned lady's neck, and says with a hug that she is frightfully sorry, only she doesn't really think she can help it.

Perhaps she cannot. Perhaps it is not her fault that she is so absurdly careless and light-hearted. But if it is, they are both iniquities, Girton thinks with a sigh, which time is sure to cure.

It is, perhaps, scarcely necessary to say that Joyce finds herself quite unable to keep the rules. There is an irresistible force in her nature which compels her to jump down-stairs two or more steps at a time, to talk in the passages, and scream in the awful solemnity of the German class when a mouse runs across the floor.

When Madame, who is ugly, and old, and kindly, and of whom Joyce is fond, takes her pupil to task for her naughtiness, Joyce's storm of crying and repentance is, for two minutes, quite overwhelming. And then she looks up with an April face of smiles shining through her tears, and in an incredibly short space of time may be heard enjoying herself without a care in the world in the playground.

Is she insincere? She has rather a heart full of impulse, and honesty, and good intentions. She is only young. With her companions she is quite popular and well beloved. She quarrels with them sometimes, and is perfectly outspoken. She kisses them five minutes afterwards—on both cheeks—and is wholly reconciled and devoted to them until the next dispute.

Madame's husband, who is seventy years old, is one of Joyce's particular admirations. She is first attracted to him because he does not teach, or try to teach, her anything. Joyce opens a conversation one day with him when she finds him working in his flower garden, and from henceforth constitutes herself his especial friend. The old man, who has a shrunken, stooping figure, and wears a very ancient shiny black coat, is himself no doubt

attached to this blithe, unthinking creature with her dancing eyes, her whimsical short petticoats, and her brown curls.

'He is the sweetest old love I ever saw,' says Joyce to Madame. And Madame has not somehow the heart to say that this tender and effusive mode of speech is scarcely respectful.

'Don't you get tired, now you are so old, doing all that stupid gardening?' Joyce asks with her gay candour as she stands looking at him one day.

Monsieur, whose English accent is quite perfect, replies, 'Yes, Mademoiselle, a little.' And Joyce thinks how awfully funny it must feel to be hundreds of years older than anyone else.

'Doesn't it?' she asks.

And Monsieur, leaning on his spade, and looking into her bright face with his kindly old eyes, says, 'Yes, Mademoiselle—perhaps.'

Yet he is glad almost to think, as Joyce dances away to join her companions, that he will not live to see this blithe, quicksilver creature in that 'awfully funny' stage of age and experience.

Joyce is now more than sixteen years old, and there begins to be some talk of her leaving school for good. Monsieur, as they walk about the garden

sometimes in playhours, feels it his duty to try and prepare her a little for the world, of which she knows nothing and hopes everything. It is always borne in upon him, indeed, after such conversations, that his efforts are quite useless. To this girl, who has known neither, sorrow and disappointment are words without meaning.

'Of course, I shan't be perfectly happy,' she says gaily. 'Why, I'm not perfectly happy here, though this is a love of a school, if they weren't so horribly mean about holidays, and the butter at the fifth form table wasn't too horrid for anything. I get into rows, you know. And the last time Madame was angry with me I cried so awfully I had to borrow all the pocket-handkerchiefs in the dormitory.'

Monsieur says no more at the time. He arrives gradually at the conclusion that to prepare Joyce for the world is impossible, and perhaps undesirable. As he watches her unconquerable joyousness he has, with Madame—though life has spared neither of them—a vague and ridiculous idea that it may possibly spare Joyce.

At the end of the term which is to be her last, the girls act *Julius Cæsar*, with Joyce herself in the title *rôle*. Julius Cæsar bundles up his brown

curls under a head-dress which he fondly imagines to be Roman. He betrays an innocent girlish angle in every fold of his toga. He has not particularly bothered himself to learn his part. He displays a joyous and total ignorance of the Shakespearian meaning in every line. He makes signs to the prompter in the wings. When the situation grows particularly tragic he laughs. He has such an innocent, bright face, such dancing eyes, and such a gay and palpable enjoyment in his own ridiculous performance that the audience would forgive him a thousand worse blunders. When he is murdered he can't for the life of him help lifting up the corner of the garment which covers his face and exchanging a wink with a friend in the front row. He is seen jumping up after his murder, some time before the curtain has quite descended. He removes his toga and the head-dress in three minutes, and is Joyce again—Joyce in a girlish party-frock, her curls tied up with a gala white ribbon, and her cheeks the soft carmine of happiness and excitement.

She eats a very healthy schoolgirl supper. When, indeed, she thinks of the next day, when she is to leave school for ever, she is quite overcome with emotion. But then she never

thinks of unhappy things very often or very long together.

As Monsieur plays for the girls' dancing in the long schoolroom afterwards, on the jingling school piano, he looks up often from the music, which, indeed, he knows by heart, at Joyce. She is gayer almost than anyone.

'It is perfectly dreadful to be going away to-morrow,' she says to Monsieur, as she stands by his side for a minute, and her eyes grow suddenly a little dim. She dances away again in a moment, and he looks after her.

The next day Joyce leaves the 'love of a school' for ever, in floods of tears and a four-wheeler. An old figure, very bent, and wearing an old coat, looks after the cab a long time. He is glad to think that Joyce, whom he has loved more than he knew, will be smiling again very soon, and yet he turns into the dull house with a sigh which is not all for his own loneliness.

Monsieur and Madame do not see their old pupil for five years. Joyce has been abroad. She has been very gay, she writes.

'Does very gay mean very happy?' says Madame, and Monsieur answers, 'Not always, I think,' in his old voice. And then she comes back.

She has put up the brown curls and let down her whimsical frock, as was to be expected. She looks a good deal older and, in some subtle sense only, different. Which might also have been expected.

She kisses Madame impulsively on both cheeks as she used to do. She insists, with a great deal of her old wilfulness and gaiety, that Monsieur shall take her round the garden. She puts her girlish arm—it is still a girlish arm, and very round and slender—through his, and chatters to him in her bright voice about a thousand of her gay doings. Once she stops and looks all round the old garden carefully.

'I used to be so—extraordinarily—happy here,' she says.

'My dear Mademoiselle,' answers the old man almost impulsively, 'have you not been happy away from here? Is there anything—the matter?'

'Nothing,' she answers very lightly. 'Nothing in the world. I am only grown up.'

## *THE DOG*

'Le dévouement qui ne s'exprime que par des preuves—'

Don is a Dandy Dinmont; is sober, middle-aged, and respectable.

He never gambols with the light-minded of his species, but he will fight with any of them, planning his attack with infinite discretion, and taking the deadly undergrip of the throat which makes him equal to any dog twice his weight. Don goes to bed regularly at a certain hour every night. He rises regularly each morning. He takes his meals in a decent, serious manner, like an elderly gentleman at his club, without haste or vulgar enjoyment. He has a cloth laid for him beneath his plate. If the cloth is not there he will not eat. If the cloth is laid for him in the kitchen he will not eat likewise. Don has all the instincts of a gentleman. He is not, indeed, proud. For that he is too well-bred. But to a person with a pedigree and of his known rank and sobriety he feels

that some consideration is due. Such consideration he exacts.

He will not sleep in his bed, for instance, unless his straw is fresh and perfect. If it is defective he looks down at it reproachfully, and then looks up still more reproachfully at his master, who is a silent, lonely man.

These two old bachelors are not demonstrative, but they seem to understand each other. One knowledge they appear to have in common, namely, that of the limitations of life. They both have a few small enjoyments, to be duly taken with gravity, but they know that there is nothing in existence worth making much stir about. They take walks together. Don's ebullitions of joy at the prospect of exercise are no doubt as irrepressible as they are short-lived. He soon settles down into a trot full of grave enjoyment and decorum. He resists temptation to hunt in the brushwood with a careful self-denial. These walks of master and dog in the lanes are rather like their walk through life—pessimistic and varied by a very limited interest in passing events. It would almost seem that they have an object at the end of their walk, but the end is home again, and there is no visible object beyond the taking of exercise.

To his master, who is preoccupied and spends many hours at his desk in the compilation of grave law-books, which no one ever seems to read, Don is indeed most honestly devoted. Nevertheless, he errs sometimes. Thrice he stays out all night in a manner disreputable and unworthy of his serious character. Once the savage instincts of his nature overcome his gentlemanly civilisation, and he destroys a couple of spring chickens. Another time he stands by, applauding, while a visitor commits a similar indiscretion, and exhibits a most reprehensible self-righteousness during the period of his friend's castigation. Once he escapes from supervision to wreak a long-harboured vengeance upon a fox-terrier in the neighbourhood. It is grievous to relate that the murderer is not penitent, but elated, when he sees his enemy lying torn and dead in the dust, and is only brought to a fitting grief and contrition when his master stands over him with a riding-whip. It is thought by his master, who is not sentimental, that the blows hurt less than the grave words with which he represents the enormity of such conduct. It is at least sure that, while Don takes the punishment with a certain subdued philosophy, when it is over he retires to his sanctum at the back of the rockery and howls.

Philosophy is one of Don's strong points. Though he hates being washed, he submits to the weekly bath by a vulgar and heavy-handed coachman and a most insulting disinfectant soap with a pessimistic submission and the air of having made up his mind to face the worst. As to the rest of the quiet household, he is in a gentlemanly and condescending manner sufficiently attached to the parlour-maid to trot round the table with her at meals, but he never loses sight of the fact that he and his master are of a different world from that beyond the green-baize door.

To his master Don gives, indeed, an affection such as he gives to no one else. It is like a human affection, only better, perhaps. For his master never actually feeds him with his own hands, and rarely punishes him, so it has its root neither in self-interest nor fear. Don feels perhaps that they two have much in common. They have their sex, first of all. They are grave and judicial, as no woman could be, when they linger over their wine in the twilight dining-room after dinner. They are well content to lie meditative and quiescent in the field on Sunday afternoons. They have developed in them that talent for rest and thought which is not developed in either the cook or the

parlour-maid. They have, above all, a certain philosophic pessimism of life. They are too wise to think that existence is really worth having, but they endure it with an uncomplaining high-bred patience that gives them the air of awaiting a consummation which they never really expect. Don stretches himself before the fire on a winter evening with a grunt which says as plainly as words, 'There are alleviations,' and his master lights a pipe, with a half-suppressed sigh, and turns resolutely to a book.

The Old Bachelor looks over the page at his companion once or twice. He has lived so long and so entirely with Don that it is possible that he endows the dog in his own mind with the power of thought. At all events, he tells a number of stories about Don which his hearers entirely refuse to believe. During the long winter evenings they sit thus, their comfort emphasised by the howling of the wind in the chimney, the master with his book, the dog with his long, long thoughts—for Don is no great sleeper, but appears to reflect much. They sit and await the consummation.

Don is not an old dog, though grave of habit and without the graces of youth. His head is indeed too large for his queer round body. His

legs are too short and his person so long that in the middle he almost touches the ground.

'That's a centreboard dog of yours,' says a yachting friend one day, but the remark falls flat. For, like many of his betters, Don has overcome physical deficiency by mental excellence. He perseveres in the chase with a fine sporting spirit, although he knows full well that the smallest rabbit can get away from him in a canter. He probably has a tolerant contempt for leggy dogs, and if any, leggy or stumpy, cast the eye of disparagement upon him, they have to deal with the abnormal jaw and the deadly undergrip.

With women Don is patient, but contemptuous. His master has an only sister who comes to stay once a year, during which visit Don's regular habits are sadly put out. He walks out in the garden by himself, and obviously prefers solitude and a word with the gardener to the society of a person who is more than half afraid of him, and calls him 'Doggy' and 'Pretty.'

Children he fails entirely to understand. He evidently considers them to be some debased form of human creature, and endures their caresses with a doubting eye fixed on his master, awaiting the word to up and slay.

Don is wholly content with his life in a philosophic way, though at times there is a look in his melancholy eyes which seems to explain the desire to get beyond the limitations of his intelligence. He would like to understand a little more and a little better, which desire assuredly brings him within touch, as it were, of the human intellect.

'Get out, Don!' ejaculates the Old Bachelor sometimes, when the dog's clumsy body takes up the best part of the hearthrug; and Don gets out with a grunt. They understand each other, quarrel in a half-hearted, manlike manner, and never formally make it up. The Old Bachelor is quite alive to Don's faults, and the dog, who has never had another master, possibly dreams of one who might be less absorbed in dull books, who might take more notice of a faithful friend, and acknowledge loving eyes and a wagging tail awaiting him at the foot of the stairs every morning at breakfast-time with the regularity of a clock. For the Old Bachelor hurries into the breakfast-room and takes up his letters with an eagerness which is reawakened every morning, and dies a sudden death before the coffee is poured into the solitary cup. The letters are from printers or publishers, and are

dull, like the books they print and publish for the Old Bachelor.

Thus, year in, year out, these two philosophers live together. A little grey appears at the Old Bachelor's temples, and on Don's heavy jaw. Don begins to grow rather stout and comfortable; his special quarries in the rabbit-warren at the back of the field hardly honour him by running away from him—a leisurely trot will secure a safe retreat from the pursuit of a person so long and round in the body, so short in the leg.

Then suddenly the consummation seems to loom upon that mental horizon which has absorbed the Old Bachelor's attention so long. Someone has died somewhere and . . . well . . . there are letters which are not from printers and publishers. One day the Old Bachelor packs his portmanteau and goes away in a cab, leaving Don disconsolate by the dining-room fire.

Don will not be comforted, and acts at this time with a gentlemanly reserve which is worthy of the pedigree on the fast yellowing sheet of paper upstairs in the master's writing-table. He acknowledges the efforts of the parlour-maid to console him; but he cannot, with the best will in the world, be comforted. He knows that before women

and menials it would be bad form to break down, so he preserves his dignified demeanour and leads his quiet dignified life alone in the dining-room, where he takes his meals in solitude. There seems to be in his mind some dim knowledge that he is master now, and he walks up the garden every morning to see what the men are doing. He sits in the sunlight on the lawn with a certain air of possession. And when a great cleaning of floors and washing of spring curtains takes place he gravely notes the bustle, and steps outside until the rooms are fit for his reception.

The household excitement seems to increase, and one day Don is forced by sudden circumstances to forget himself. He sees the cab approaching, and, recognising the portmanteau, so far loses sight of his position as to rush wildly into the kitchen to tell the cook, who, as it happens, is in her best black dress and a fluster.

Don gets a little flurried, and does not exactly know how he comes to find himself in the arms of a total stranger, who hurries into the dining-room and, kneeling impetuously on the hearth-rug, presses a cheek which is young and fresh still against his grizzled face.

'This is Don—this is Don, I know,' she says.

And the Old Bachelor answers in a queer voice :

'Yes—that is Don.'

'Poor old dear—he doesn't understand,' cries the Consummation, with another hug and a laugh, which is only half gay.

Don looks from one to the other with a doubtful wag of the tail. Perhaps he does understand—a little.

Martha waters these forlorn and stunted geraniums with the greatest pride and indiscretion

## *THE CARETAKER*

'Quand c'est le cœur qui conduit, il entraîne'

Martha caretakes a decrepit City warehouse. She cleans, or imagines that she cleans, the offices of a depressed company of tea merchants and of a necessitous land surveyor. They confound her hopelessly when they arrive every morning and behold the thickness of the dust on their ledgers and the black and smoky nature of their fires. And Martha speaks of them tenderly as 'my gentlemen,' and inquires fondly after their wives and families.

Martha's appearance has, it must be confessed, a worn and dingy air, not unlike the house she lives in. She is invariably attired in an ancient shawl and a frowsy black bonnet. People are apt to forget that the wrinkled old face beneath it is very kind and tender. The blackness of Martha's aprons and the streaky nature of her house-cleaning cause them to lose sight of the fact that

London griminess has never reached Martha's soul.

Martha is boundlessly simple and contented. It is fortunate that an external cleanliness is not necessary to her happiness, since it has been her fate to look at Thames Street, breathe Thames Street, and live in Thames Street since she was five-and-twenty. Once she has been into the country. But that was a long time ago; though on the window-sill of her attic there still live miserably some of the cuttings she took from the plants she brought back with her.

Martha waters those forlorn and stunted geraniums with the greatest pride and indiscretion. She imagines that the smutty and despairing musk still smells deliciously, and puts her old nose into it and sniffs with the greatest enjoyment in the world. On sultry days she opens her window and sits at work by her 'garden.' Her old face is quite placid and contented. The expressive language of the costermonger below rises to her ear. The refreshing scent of decaying vegetables must quite overpower that of the elderly musk. But either Martha has long ceased to expect unalloyed pleasure, or is of such a very simple nature that she can enjoy imperfect happiness perfectly.

Martha is very proud of her attic. It may not, in fact does not, contain much oxygen. But there is a beautiful picture of the Queen smiling blandly out of a tradesman's almanac of the year fifty. Martha's circumstances render it necessary that there should constantly be washing drying in lines across the ceiling. But she takes her meals quite blithely beneath this canopy, and has no feelings at all about cutting her cheese—she never seems to eat anything except cheese, or drink anything except tea—on the patchwork quilt which covers the *négligé* manner in which she has made her bed.

Martha has a table indeed, but it is quite covered with the accumulated treasures of a life-time. There is a religious work presented to her by a Bible Minister angling for a congregation, which Martha no doubt values the more because she cannot read it. There is a creature which may or may not represent a parrot, with boot buttons for eyes and a body of many-coloured wools. Martha blows the dust from the glass case which encloses it with an infinite affection and reverence. She made the parrot herself a long, long time ago, and is tenderly proud of it still. By its side is a Testament scored by a hand long dead, and with Martha's homely name written on

the fly-leaf. There are two china shepherdesses, with pink sashes and squints, on the mantelpiece, and an In Memoriam card of Martha's dead nephew.

By the window there is a bird in a cage, to whom Martha chirrups cheerfully, and whom she addresses as 'Enery. The bird never chirrups to Martha, old age and the stifling air of Thames Street having long silenced him for ever. But Martha's placid optimism has caused her to believe persistently for many years that if she only chirrups long and cheerfully enough 'Enery will reply to her at last.

'He's wonderful for company,' she says, 'and eats next to nothing.' Which to Martha's mind is the greatest recommendation a friend can have.

Martha is indeed well paid for her caretaking. When one considers the sketchy nature of her cleaning she appears to be ridiculously overpaid. Martha's money is not spent on herself. She eats very little—and cheese and tea may be bought incredibly cheap and nasty in Thames Street. She indulges in no vanities of dress. The frowsy shawl and bonnet are of immemorial antiquity. Her employers surmise uncharitably that she does not waste her substance on soap. Martha, in fact, wastes nothing. She has a money-box secreted

in a drawer amid an awful confusion of other treasures. She is a miser. She has saved and stinted herself for years and years. She has denied herself not luxuries, for luxuries have never even suggested themselves to her, but what other people would call necessaries.

On that far-off visit to the country Martha found and loved a great-niece. Tilly was, it must be confessed, a dreadful, stout, stolid, apple-cheeked plebeian baby. But she took possession of Martha's lonely old heart. Martha carried back to London a cheap photograph of Tilly in her best frock, and a deep-seated resolution concerning Tilly in her foolish old soul. When Tilly is old enough she is to come up to London to live, at Martha's expense, with Martha, and be 'prenticed to what Martha speaks of reverentially in the abstract as 'the dressmaking.' Martha, like a true Cockney, loves and despises the country, and is convinced that London is the only place in which to get on. And the dressmaking is such a genteel employment.

To 'prentice Tilly to a very good house, to be able to clothe Tilly as her high position will require, to be able to support Tilly elegant, as Martha says, Martha instituted the money-box, and puts into it weekly much more than she can

afford. She works for Tilly with the dogged persistence of the woman of one idea. The stout earthy child whom she has not seen for a dozen years or more has been beautified, perhaps beyond recognition, in her fond and foolish imagination. Or she thinks that large red cheeks and a stolid gaze—admirably caught by the cheap photograph—are incapable of improvement. Tilly's picture is assigned an honourable place by the side of a terrible but beloved portrait of the Prince of Wales. Though Martha is devotedly attached to the Royal Family, there have been days on which the Prince's countenance has been left thick in dust. But Martha always makes a point of cleaning Tilly reverentially with a corner of her shawl. She gazes at the picture when she has performed this operation with an admiration and tenderness in her dim old eyes which are quite ridiculous and pathetic. Two or three times a week she breathes on the glass which protects Tilly, and rubs it vigorously with a piece of a cloth used indiscriminately as a duster or a handkerchief.

For Tilly's sake she refuses to join a party of lady friends who are going by water to Greenwich. One has to live in Thames Street, perhaps, to know what a temptation such an expedition repre-

sents. The land surveyor's wife sends Martha a cheap petticoat for a Christmas present. It is beautifully striped in many colours, and Martha says, 'It's too good for my likes,' and puts it tenderly away in a drawer for Tilly. For Tilly's sake she denies herself sugar in her tea. For Tilly's sake she creeps about the old house in boots so aged that the tea merchant is constrained to speak to her severely on her disreputable appearance. For Tilly's sake she goes to bed early to save candles, and lies awake hour after hour with her old thoughts to keep her company. For Tilly's sake she daily makes, in fact, the thousand little sacrifices of which only a great love is capable.

The tea merchant, exasperated beyond bearing at last at her incompetence, tells her her services will be no longer required. On consideration perhaps of her having inquired tenderly after his relations every morning for an indefinite number of years, he consents to her still occupying the attic on the payment of a modest rent.

Then Martha seeks some new employment. Her old heart sinks when a week has passed and she has failed to find it. For herself she can live on almost nothing. But Tilly is seventeen now, and is coming up to London next year. Martha

would rather starve than take a penny from her money-box. She has called it Tilly's money so long that she really believes now to spend it would be robbing Tilly of her own. She is reduced to selling 'Enery—with tears. He fetches a very, very small sum, and Martha has loved him as if he were a human creature. The theological work presented by the Bible Christian minister goes also, and Martha, who has never read it, cannot see the vacant place on the table because of the mist in her old eyes.

At last she is engaged by the parish clergyman to clean the church. Up to this period Martha has been a Baptist—not so much because she has a leaning towards that particular sect, or any particular sect, as because the Baptist chapel is very handy, the minister affable, and the footstools large, fat, comfortable ones of a showy red baize.

'But it 'd be sooperstition to let them 'assicks stand in the way of my niece,' Martha says thoughtfully to herself. The 'assicks do not stand in Tilly's way. In a day or two Martha, with an optimistic smile on her wrinkled old face, may be seen providing Ritualistic books of devotion to devout young gentlemen who have come to church to attend Prime.

Then Tilly comes. Martha has house-cleaned her room for Tilly's reception. She has not, indeed, house-cleaned it very thoroughly, partly because she has not had time and is seventy years old and a little feeble, and partly because Martha has never cleaned anything thoroughly, including herself. But she has blown the dust off most things, and put up a piece of new window curtain. She has bought a shilling looking-glass for Tilly's benefit, Martha never seeing her own kind, tender, wrinkled, grubby old countenance from year's end to year's end. She has provided quite a sumptuous tea—with sugar. She has made the bed almost neatly. She has, in fact, done everything that love can suggest to her.

Before she goes out in the frowsy bonnet and ancient shawl to meet Tilly at the station she takes a last look, through eyes proudly and tenderly dim, at Tilly's picture. The day has come for which she has been working for years, for which she has denied herself gladly, for which she has yearned and prayed. She can feel her heart beating quicker under the threadbare shawl, and her hands tremble a little.

She is much too early for the train, and has to wait so long in the waiting-room where she has

arranged to meet Tilly that she falls into a doze. A robust female with a developed figure, a tight waist, and a flowery hat nudges her at last impatiently with a tin hat-box.

'Lor, aunt!' says Tilly, 'what with you so shabby, and snoring so ungenteel in a public place, I 'ardly liked to own yer.'

'My dear!' cries Martha in a trembling voice. 'My dear! My dear!' and she puts her withered old arms round the girl's neck, and kisses her and cries over her for happiness.

'What a take on to be sure!' says Tilly, who is perfectly practical. 'Let's go 'ome.'

And they go home and begin life together.

For a month Martha is happy. She is happy at least so far that she can watch the accomplished Tilda reading a novelette and profoundly admire so much education. She puts her ridiculous old head on one side to look proudly and fondly at the stylish black curls shading Tilly's rubicund countenance. She ventures to kiss Tilly's cheek very gently when that young lady is snoring profoundly after a day's pleasure, for Tilly has not yet started 'the dressmaking.' And the premium is still wrapped up safely in dingy newspaper in the money-box.

Martha is creeping upstairs one night, weary but optimistic, after a hard day's cleaning at the church, when a slipshod infant from next door thrusts a note into her hand. The slipshod infant, who has received an education, reads it to Martha at Martha's desire. It contains only a few lines.

Tilly has gone away. Tilly has eloped with a costermonger. Married respectable at a registry, she phrases it. 'That's all,' says the infant of education.

That is all. But that is why Martha falls back with her face drawn and ashen and her lips trembling. That is all. It is the end of those years of work and denial and hoping. Yet what is more natural than that Tilly should desire matrimony, and try her blandishments upon a costermonger who plied his trade most conveniently beneath Martha's window? What is more natural in this cruel world than love repaid by ingratitude, and trustfulness by deceit?

Martha gropes her way blindly to the attic. It is not yet so dark there but she can see distinctly the poor little improvements she made for Tilly's coming. She turns the cheap looking-glass with its face to the wall. It was meant to reproduce Tilly, buxom and twenty, and not Martha, poor,

old, ugly, and disappointed. She catches sight of Tilly's picture at four years old—Tilly, stolid enough indeed, but little, loving, and good. And Martha cries, and buries her head in her arms, and the tears mark grimy courses down her furrowed cheeks.

'If you could 'a trusted me, Tilly,' she says. 'If you would but 'a trusted me.'

Until this bitter hour she has not known how Tilly has filled her life. How she has lived only for Tilly, and thought and hoped only for her. And Tilly has gone away, and Martha's house is left unto her desolate.

A footstep outside startles her. For one wild foolish moment she thinks that Tilly has come back—that she has but dreamt a bad dream and is awake again. And she recognises the voluble tones of the mamma of the educated infant, and dries her tears, not from pride—Martha has so little—but from loyalty to Tilda.

Mrs. Jones always have said that Tilda was a bad lot. 'A impudent, brazen-faced thing,' says Mrs. Jones, warming to the description.

And Martha, with a little colour coming into her poor white cheeks, knows as Tilly meant no harm. And marriages are made in 'eaven.

She may have to acknowledge Tilda erring to her own heart, but how can she give her up to the merciless judgment of a merciless world?

'You're a poor sperited one, that you are,' says Mrs. Jones, 'and as likely as not you've never looked to see if she 'ave made off with the premium.'

Martha has not looked. Is startled into confessing it. She has not thought of the premium, so hardly earned. She has only thought that she has loved Tilda, and Tilda has not loved her. And a swift burning colour comes into Martha's cheeks, and some sudden deadly premonition creeps to her heart and closes coldly upon it. And she answers steadily, 'My Tilda's as honest as you are.'

'Don't you be so sure,' says Mrs. Jones vindictively. 'You look and see.'

Perhaps Martha takes some sort of resolution as she goes heavily to the drawer where the money-box is kept. Or perhaps no resolution is necessary, because her ignorant, loving old soul is of its nature infinitely faithful. Her hands and lips are quite steady now, and she is not afraid of Mrs. Jones's 'sperited' gaze. The money-box is quite light, and the money collected was chiefly in pence and halfpence. It is also unlocked. And Martha

turns with her back to the drawer and faces Tilda's enemies.

'You can tell all as asks,' she says in an old voice that is very clear and firm, 'as my Tilda is quite straight and honest. And them as says she isn't—lies.'

'I'll believe as you speak true,' says Mrs. Jones. 'If you don't, well, the Lord forgive you!'

And who shall say that He will not?

## *THE PARSON*

'Le monde est une foule d'isolés'

He lives in the days of Farmer George. He is perhaps fifty years old. He has a jolly, round, red, tanned, weather-beaten face with shrewd grey eyes under shaggy eyebrows. He wears a dress which is as careless, as comfortable, and as unclerical as may well be. He has spurs clinking under his surplice, and a dozen easy tumbled pink coats in his untidy bachelor quarters at the Rectory.

The Rectory, an abominable, dull, damp, moth-eaten hole, is the reward of vigorous Hebrew at Cambridge. It is whispered, indeed, that Parson Jack was not only vigorous at Hebrew and at compelling the errant undergraduate attention with his great burly voice and fine broad English personality, but also, says report, at athletics of every kind. At games and on the river. At a rollicking song, at a rollicking story, the life of a college

breakfast in his gravest days, and the wildest of the wild in his wild youth.

It is certain that Parson Jack knows very well how to take odds or lay them on any race or racer the sporting Squire of his parish can name to him. It is whispered, indeed, that he knows the points of a horse a good deal better than the subtleties of theology. He thinks perhaps—God bless him, says the Squire—that a good seat, a brave zest for a fine old English sport, and the keen healthy excitement that comes with a fair crisp morning and the bay of the hounds are in themselves part of an honest virtue and conducive to it.

He is not, it will be seen, strictly clerical. He has his notions of duty indeed, which are, like himself, broad and honest. He will go round the parish after his late, untidy bachelor breakfast at the Rectory and ask Hodge, in uncommonly forcible language, which has never even occurred to him as being unorthodox, why he was not in church last Sunday. He has a joke for the women, and the worst jokes sound better in his great jolly tones than the best in another man's, and a shining sixpence out of his own poorly-equipped pockets for the children. He is not, perhaps, very dignified. The only advice he ever offers is quite worldly and

material—how to buy a horse, and how—God bless you, Sir, says Jeannie, with tears in her country eyes—to pay the rent. He will send down the people, when they are ill, one of the prime puddings made by his housekeeper, or a bottle of his old port, which he takes to be a cure, or at least a panacea, for every ailment under Heaven. He gives them no spiritual directions. A sense of his own unworthiness oppresses the most humble heart in the world. When Hodge, dying, confesses to him some sin of a wicked youth, the Parson says, 'God forgive us!' including himself in that need for an especial mercy. He has the widest charity and pity for the faults of his people, feeling himself to be more faulty than all. When he reads, in his great tones, the Confession in Church, one guesses whom he takes to be the worst of lost sheep and miserable offenders.

He is unorthodox enough at the service, Heaven knows. His Georgian congregation are not indeed particular, and accept complacently irregularities which would cause the hair of the faithful of the present enlightened generation to stand on end. The Parson's great dog follows him always into Church. If Rough lingers, as he will sometimes, in the aisle, taking a simple canine interest in the

congregation, the Parson whistles to him with perfect simplicity and no idea of irreverence to come into the Vestry, where Rough scrabbles at the door feelingly during the service. Neither does the Parson perceive any moral wrong in curtailing the Liturgy when the day is fine, and his human nature, as well as everyone else's, is longing to be out in the sunshine. He preaches the long formal sermon in fashion in his time, in loud, honest tones, and getting over it as fast as he can. He is not particularly grieved at heart to hear Hodge snoring in the free seats during the discourse, which the Parson knows to be trite and dull as well as anybody. The hideousness of a Church built in the reign of Queen Anne does not pain his artistic sense in the least, nor does the excruciating band in the gallery jar on his fine outdoor nerves. When My Lady from the Manor, who is town-bred and delicate, complains to him that there are black-beetles in her pew, he replies, 'Crush 'em, Madam, crush 'em!' in his great voice, and considers the matter settled. He gives out notices in Church which are in no way connected with religion. 'The hounds meet on Blakely Green on Thursday,' he says in a friendly fashion, 'and mind you're all in time.' His eccentricities, if indeed they can be called by such a

name in his day, are so far from being disliked by the people that they even seem to put the Parson on a friendly human footing with themselves. The fact that he finds the Litany, as they do, conducive to slumber, makes as it were a bond of union between them. They are even pleased when they discover, as they very soon do from his man, that the Parson finds it impossible to rise early, except for hunting, that he is honestly fond of his port wine, and takes a nap after dinner in the pleasantest human fashion.

With his equals the Parson is popular too. The Squire forgives him his Hebrew when he finds that the books are moulding away unread in the Rectory library. And the Parson is famous for his good stories and his loud honest sense of humour. His very laugh even—a great, huge, burly, vigorous laugh—amuses his friends. He is held, no doubt rightly, to be as good a judge of port as any man in the county, and takes his bottle after a hard day's hunting without, it must be said, any evil result. The Parson tells his best stories indeed after his wine. If his influence on the party is certainly not spiritual, or even clerical, it has, in a coarse age, a robust cleanliness. For the Parson, for the sake of one woman in a past of

which he never speaks, respects all, and when he is at table the conversation is at least decent.

After dinner the Parson—and it is to be feared that the fact that many of his friends are not in a position to accompany him does not shock him at all—goes upstairs to take tea with Madam in her drawing-room. He sings some of his rollicking college songs to her accompaniment. He misses out such verses as he thinks unsuited for her hearing. He is fond of this woman, who is gentle and good, though neither beautiful nor young, with a quite simple affection. He likes to sit in her drawing-room, with the flowers in bowls on the table, with the pretty old tea things and silver by the fire, with the harpsichord open and lighted by candles in massive candlesticks, with her woman's work here and the delicate touch of a woman everywhere. He is fifty years old, a robust outdoor person, who has no business to be moved by such things as these—no business to miss them when he goes back to the Rectory with its dull furniture and its masculine hardness and untidiness. And yet—and yet the Parson has a habit which grows upon him yearly of lingering a long while in Madam's drawing-room, of sitting there and leaning forward in his great chair and looking

deep into the fire when she has gone upstairs to see her children, and of walking home alone presently to the gloomy old Rectory with his hands thrust deep into his pockets and his honest eyes full of an unwonted thought.

He has there many lonely and unoccupied hours. In his day it is not expected of him to form guilds, clothing clubs, and temperance societies. He would laugh his jolly laugh at the idea of a sporting bachelor, such as he is, lecturing on the rearing of infants at a mothers' meeting. Neither has he any need to write sermons, having a fusty batch of the very dullest discourses (from which he draws a couple haphazard every Sunday) lying ready to hand in a cupboard mixed up with hunting-boots and riding-whips. He has long given up his Hebraic studies. What is the use of Hebrew after all when one's companions are agricultural labourers, or sporting squires scarcely more enlightened? He is indolent too, perhaps. Has been an indolent man all his life, he thinks humbly. He draws out his great tobacco-pouch from his pocket with a sort of sigh when he has dined solitarily of an evening and come into his study to drink his bottle there alone. He has been used to be much alone always. He has never known the care or

plague of a woman. And has nothing now to keep him company but a memory.

For sometimes, even to him, as he sits there with the shadows creeping coldly into the unclosed room, and the wine pushed forward untasted on the table before him, a figure comes back from Hades and stands for a moment beside him. Angela! They called her Angela though not yet all an angel, but that dearer thing—a woman. The faint perfume of her hair reaches him as he sits with his old head fallen upon his hands. He has strongly upon him the feeling that if he could look up—and as strongly that he cannot—he would see her in her white frock, with her curls falling on her neck and the faint colour in her sweet saint's face. She died. He is glad that she died before the world touched her. And wonders only vaguely if, had she lived, he would have been something better than the idle, easy, material, self-indulgent, weather-beaten old fellow he finds himself to-night. His simple and faithful heart is filled for the moment with God knows what prayers, penitence, tenderness, remorse, and longing. But before the night has crept in upon him and shut out from sight the untidy room with its sporting pictures on the wall and books rotten from long disuse, like a dead ambition, he is asleep with his grey head

fallen forward on the arms of his stained pink coat and some shadow of the dream in his heart upon his rough old face.

The Parson lives to a great age. Not so great indeed that the honest tenor of his way is disturbed by awakened bishops and an enlightened laity. He is to the end as he was in the beginning. To the last he shortens his services at his own honest discretion, and plays the cornet in Church with perfect simplicity and no previous acquaintance with that instrument when the band takes a holiday. To the last he will laugh his jolly laugh over a bottle with the Squire, rap out an oath from long habit, and tell a good story as no one but the Parson can. To the last he has the most honest compassion for brute and human suffering, and the finest reverence and affection for a good woman or a little child. To the last he confesses himself from a heart, which is surely the humblest and tenderest in the world, to be the greatest of sinners. Has to the last, if one will, the error, ignorance, and neglect of his time. Is to the last the straightest rider, the keenest sportsman, the kindliest, simplest, and most unorthodox of his cloth. Is to the last brave, cheery, manly. And to the last alone—with one faithful and abiding memory.

To whose ashes be peace.

## *THE CHILD*

'Plus on aime, plus on souffre'

Barbara is six years old. She has stout cheeks, stout legs, and a temper. She has a sister called Pollie, who is sweet and seven, and a brother in button-up shoes and a frock. Pollie and Bab and Tom spend nearly all their days in the nursery. Mamma has a taste for society, and has not much time to play maternity.

'Children are a great deal happier left to themselves,' she says comfortably. Mamma is constantly announcing such convenient axioms, and believing them.

The children are indeed very happy by themselves. Bab particularly, perhaps, because Bab has thoughts, and lives, with the dolls, in a far world of her own. She has, perhaps, five-and-twenty children, who are dressed, taught, and amused, put to bed, and nursed through dire diseases. Matilda is the eldest of them. Matilda

Bab says, 'No, I'm not  I don't want to climb trees.  It's stupid'

has black hair, large, beautiful, staring eyes, and the loveliest vermilion complexion. She accompanies Bab everywhere. When Papa takes the children a trip in his yacht Bab refuses, with much temper and firmness, to go without her child. Bab, lying prone on the deck, when the chops of the Channel have become too much for her inner woman, holds Matilda's kid paw tightly in her own moist hand. She feels as if she were dying, but even in death she will not desert Matilda. Matilda's perambulator has always to accompany the party. It is considered by Bab too precious to be packed up, and if she loses sight of it she roars.

Bab has indeed a fine pair of lungs, to which it must be confessed she gives plenty of exercise. The potency of her emotions will not allow her to weep gentle tears like Pollie. A rising colour in Bab's fat face and the slow opening of Bab's particularly competent mouth are perfectly reliable signals to Mamma to ring the bell and have Bab forcibly ejected from the room by a muscular nursery-maid.

In the nursery the children play at House. The enterprising Pollie is generally abroad catering for the family. Tom goes out hunting on the

rocking-horse. But Bab sits at home surrounded by her children. Sometimes they have to be corrected, but more often to be hushed and loved on Bab's maternal breast. Anyhow, they always need her. Her sense of responsibility is perhaps, in its childish way, as great as that of many real mothers. She has at least so far the true maternal feeling that, though she has so many children, she loves each as singly and devotedly as if she had but that one alone.

On Sundays the children play Church. Pollie, correct and officious in a night-gown, is the clergyman. Tom plays the organ on a penny whistle in a handy cupboard. Bab and the dolls form the congregation. At a certain signal Bab causes Matilda to faint with a scream. And Tom removes the prostrate body with great zest and enjoyment. Tom and Pollie indeed sometimes forget the solemnity of the occasion and laugh. But Bab is always serious and tranquil. She is a mother. She has to set an example to the children.

'Bab thinks dolls is real,' lisps Tom.

'No, I don't,' says Bab, her face getting very red and holding Matilda very tight indeed. But it is a story. They are real—to her.

Bab reads. She reads all the books she can find, whether she understands them or not. She reproduces the long words she encounters in her conversation afterwards with a perfectly original pronunciation and adapted to a meaning of her own.

Mamma says, 'What a queer child!'—a trifle scornfully. And Bab goes back to her book-world —so much simpler and easier than the real one— with that disparaging accent lingering somehow about her small heart.

Pollie is a much more successful child than Bab. Bab knows that Mamma thinks so. Bab thinks so herself. Pollie is very courageous, for instance. Pollie climbs trees in the garden— quite high trees. She puts her heroic countenance through the branches and calls to Bab, fat and timid, beneath: 'You're afraid.'

Bab says, 'No, I'm not. I don't want to climb trees. It's stupid,' with quite unnecessary vehemence. But in Bab's heart her greatest ambition is to be like Pollie in everything. Bab has indeed for Pollie one of those blind, faithful devotions which seldom survive childhood. Bab is not angry with Pollie for being so much prettier than she is herself. Bab thinks that Pollie, dressed in white

muslin and a pink sash to go out to a party, is just like an angel. She smooths Pollie's white silk legs with a small, reverent paw. She loves Pollie, and loves to see her beautiful.

Mamma likes Pollie best. Who could help it? It is at least a preference against which Bab herself makes no appeal. And if there is a little wistfulness in her fat face when Mamma kisses Pollie and looks at her with admiring eyes before she starts for the party, it is a wistfulness in which there is no shadow of bitterness or disloyalty to Pollie.

Bab sometimes goes to parties too. Not very often, because Bab is not a party child, nor likely to do Mamma any particular credit. Bab outsits all the other guests at tea. She is calmly consuming her tenth piece of bread and butter in the dining-room long after the other children have retired to play games in the hall. When the lady of the house, affable and gracious, inquires if Bab has enjoyed herself, Bab replies with grave simplicity, 'A little, thank you, but not very much.'

Bab is, indeed, fatally honest. When she is sent down to the drawing-room to be looked at by the afternoon visitors Bab surveys those visitors with so calm and direct a gaze as to sometimes

quite embarrass them. No wonder Pollie is the show child. Bab is quite plain and fat and simple. She hugs Matilda and speaks the truth.

Mamma is never unkind to Bab. Bab has every opportunity of indulging a fine appetite for bread and butter. She is suitably clothed. When Mamma says Bab has a passionate temper and an obstinate will, Mamma is perfectly right. And Mamma is so constituted that she cannot love—particularly—a child who gives her trouble, and upon whose appearance and manners she is never complimented.

It happens, therefore, that Bab's small life has many dark moments. She does not understand exactly why Mamma is not fond of her. For herself, it is to the ugliest and forlornest of her children that her deepest tenderness goes out. A faded infant with a squint, and pale hair mostly pulled out by Tom, appeals by its very misfortunes to Bab's sweetest love and compassion.

When Mamma invites Pollie to go with her to evening church, Bab, standing unnoticed in the background, bursts into a terrible howl. It is not that Bab particularly wants to go to church, which has always seemed to her a dull function of unnecessary length. But she wants to be asked

to go. The background is such a cold place in which to spend one's poor little life.

Bab strokes Mamma's delicate hand, not the less lovingly because her own little paw is grubby with recent excavations in the garden. And Mamma says sharply:

'Really, Bab, what have I told you about your hands? Go away directly, child!'

Bab forgives—is there any forgiveness like a child's?—a thousand sharp speeches and hasty words. But she does not forget, or repeat her small overtures of love and devotion.

Mamma teaches Bab music—for a week. She smacks Bab's fat stupid fingers when Bab, whose genius does not lie in the direction of music, is more exasperating than usual. She says hard things too, and Bab carries them away to a dull lumber-room where she is used to fight out her small tragedies alone. The lumber-room has a very narrow window, affording just a glimpse of sky. It has a very old carpet, whose faded pattern Bab has often studied dully through hot tears. Bab sits on a trunk, and rocks the forlorn doll to her heart. She does not know what is the matter with her life. Her griefs do not, indeed, last long. But while they last they are very bitter. And

Tom's little button-up shoes patter up the staircase, and Tom, standing at the door in his insufficient frock, says—

'Don't cry, Bab. There's jam for tea, and Nurse is going to take us to see the postman's funeral.'

The prospect of jam or a funeral cheers Bab considerably. But she is too little to remember, when troubles come again the next day, or the day after that, how soon and how simply they are consoled.

It happens that Pollie and Bab go to stay one summer with Mamma's sister-in-law. In-Law is not quite so young or so pretty as Mamma herself. Moreover, Mamma has married In-Law's favourite brother. It will therefore be readily understood that there is no love lost between the ladies.

In-Law takes to Bab very kindly. Bab, indeed, though not pretty like Polly, has a red, healthful countenance and a comfortable person not unprepossessing. And In-Law has discovered that Bab is not Mamma's favourite. Bab, lying awake in her cot the first night and contemplating life through its green bars, overhears In-Law, who has come to kiss Bab in bed, say to a lady friend who is with her—

'Dreadful injustice, you know. Lena's favouritism makes one quite dislike her. This child—nothing, I assure you, and the other brought forward and indulged in every way.'

Bab does not know what this speech means at the time; later she finds out. In-Law is always giving Bab kisses and presents. Bab transfers the giant's share of each to Pollie.

'Auntie likes you best, Bab,' says Pollie, a little cloud on her pretty face.

'Does she?' says Bab wistfully, with a kind of apology to Pollie in her small voice.

No one, it seems, has ever liked Bab best before. Bab feels a little disturbed that it should be so now. But In-Law's preference remains manifest. In-Law asks Bab all about her home. They are taking a walk together, and Bab has been very conversational indeed.

'Is Pollie kind?' Pollie is very kind indeed. Pollie is clever too. She climbs trees and goes to a dancing class.

'Who does Mamma like best—you or Pollie?' Bab's fat face grows a little serious. Mamma likes Pollie best. So does everybody. Pollie is pretty, and her hair curls. 'Mine is rats' tails,' adds Bab regretfully.

'Do you like Mamma, Bab?' Bab's red cheeks grow redder.

'I like Mamma,' she answers sturdily. But after that, for no reason of which she knows, she likes In-Law less.

One day, in the garden, In-Law calls Bab to her. Pollie has gone out for a walk with Nurse, and Bab has been amusing herself with Matilda.

'I've had a letter from Mamma,' says In-Law; 'she wants Pollie home. She does not want you. What do you say to that, Bab?'

Bab does not say anything, because she cannot. There is a large lump in her throat, and a great slow tear falls on Matilda's staring face.

'Mamma is cross to you, isn't she, Bab?' says In-Law insinuatingly.

A second tear falls on Matilda, but Bab says, 'No, she isn't,' with a red, passionate face, and pushes away In-Law's arm which is round her.

'But you would rather stay here, Bab? Mamma only loves Pollie, and *is* cross to you, you know she is, and——'

And Bab, with a substantial boot, designed expressly for muddy country lanes, inflicts a fierce kick upon In-Law's ankle, and bursts into a roar.

In-Law is laid up for three weeks. Bab has disgraced herself for ever. She is whipped, removed to the nursery, and allowed no jam. She is severely reprimanded several times a day by Nurse for her wicked conduct to her kind aunt. Perhaps Bab has a private consolation in the depths of her own loyal soul. She thrives, anyhow, amazingly on jamless bread and butter. She croons Matilda contentedly to sleep. She is a little quieter than usual, but not unhappy. Then she is taken home, with Pollie. Mamma is in the hall, and Bab runs up to her. Bab's stout face is quite red with pleasure. She is less afraid of Mamma than she has been for a long time. Perhaps there is a sense of faith and loyalty in her heart which makes her bold. She knows In-Law has told Mamma the story. But then In-Law's version has been carefully revised.

'Bab, what a naughty girl you have been!' says Mamma. 'I'm ashamed of you.'

Mamma is kissing Pollie as Bab falls back blind with a sudden rush of tears. Pollie and the fuss of the arrival of luggage and nurses keep Mamma's attention. And Bab stumbles up unnoticed with heavy steps to the old lumber-room.

She has not even the forlorn doll to clasp to her heart. But she has come perhaps to a grief in which even the dearest of her make-believe children could not console her. She has been true, has lied to keep faith, and her reward has missed her. She has hurt In-Law—who has, after all, been kind, and given her many sweets and kisses—for Mamma, who is only angry with her after all. Bab wipes away heavy tears with her black paw until her round face has dismal streaks on it, and is swollen and red. She traces blindly the worn pattern on the carpet with a wet forefinger. Her small figure is shaken by long-drawn sobs. Perhaps her grief is very much like a grown-up grief, after all, only she has not the reason and experience of age to help her in it. She has found out—too early—that the world is hard, and that love given does not mean love returned. And she sobs hot miserable sobs until she is tired out. Though everyone else has forgotten her, some tender Providence remembers her still, for when Nurse comes to fetch her to bed she is already asleep in the darkness, with stained cheeks, tumbled hair, and heavy breathing.

Who shall wonder that faith and love such as

Bab's so seldom survive childhood? And yet there are some small loyal hearts in whom grown-up wisdom and prudence cannot destroy those better things which are revealed unto babes.

Perhaps Bab has such a heart as this. And she is no longer a child.

## *THE BAD PENNY*

'On pardonne tant que l'on aime'

His parents, denizens of pompous and prosperous Bloomsbury, decree him for Eton from his cradle. Merchant Taylors' was good enough for his father, who has been a business man all his life, is still redolent of the City, from which he has retired, honest, sober, and in middle life. But Dick must go to Eton. Of course, says the mother. What is the use of having money if one doesn't spend it on Dick? So he goes through a course of governesses, tutors, and preparatory schools—a varied course, because none of them will keep him more than three months at the most. It is not so much that he is idle, though he is very idle; it is not so much that he is stupid, for he has some cunning amid his dulness; but he is bad—that is what one of his masters says of him. Bloomsbury Square has never liked that master—always knew there

was something fishy about that man. When Mrs. Bloomsbury hears that he has eloped with a housemaid, that is just exactly what she would have expected of him—so unjust, and so prejudiced against Dick. The Penny is one of those infinitely-to-be-pitied people who are always exciting prejudice in others. There is a prejudice against him at Eton—a dreadful prejudice, which finally grows so strong that the authorities decide that the only way to remove it is to remove him. He is therefore removed.

He comes back to Bloomsbury Square with a bluster. Eton, he says, is a beastly hole—not fit for a gentleman. His mother tries to be fair, to hear both sides of the case, to believe that Dick has—in some very minor degree, of course—erred as well as the masters; but she cannot. It is to be thought that she is as just as most women, but to believe anything against her boy is not to be expected of her—it is impossible.

Dick is removed to a private tutor's. His father says that private coaching is the very thing for a young man—beats Eton hollow. When Dick's letters arrive—they are letters which, in point of spelling and composition, would disgrace a kitchen-maid—his face reddens with pride. He puts them

all away together in a desk where he keeps other sacred possessions.

One fine morning Dick turns up again unexpectedly in Bloomsbury Square. The tutor, he finds, is such a beastly cad; he has therefore renounced him. From a letter which arrives next morning from the tutor it appears that the renunciation is mutual. There is a garbled story of a flirtation with a shopgirl; but it is very garbled, and, of course, entirely incorrect. Dick says that he never saw such a liar as that coach—enough to corrupt any fellow's morals. Therefore, of course, it is only right and proper that Dick should leave him. Some young men do not mind to what influences they subject themselves—not so the Penny. Mr. and Mrs. Bloomsbury are quite hurt and annoyed when their son-in-law, an outspoken person, condoles with them, and is sorry to hear the young cub has been up to his tricks again.

The Penny manages to scrape through an Entrance Examination, and goes to Cambridge.

'Not every young man, mind you, can pass those Entrance Exams. nowadays,' says Papa, sipping his glass of port with honest pride in the Penny's extraordinary prowess. 'They tell me,' Dick says himself, 'that it's a very different thing

to what it was twenty years ago. The competition s enormous—by Gad! sir, enormous!'

Mr. Jones, also of Bloomsbury Square, quite believes you. Neither he nor the proud father has ever been to the University himself; but they send their sons, and know as much about it, mind you, as anyone. The mother colours with pleasure at the other end of the table. It is indeed a privilege, knowing how dreadfully idle *some* young men are, to have a son like Dick. Bloomsbury Square discovers, by degrees, that the privilege is a very expensive one. It is so expensive, in fact, that they find out it is very much more healthy, as well as a great deal more enjoyable, to walk instead of drive everywhere; so they put down the carriage. 'Only don't tell Dick,' says the mother. 'It would hurt his feelings so dreadfully to think we were going without any little comfort on his account.'

So Dick's feelings are not harrowed, and when he comes down for the first vacation a carriage is jobbed. A young man finds a carriage so useful, and Dick would naturally not like to be without one. Very likely he will not notice the difference between this one and our own. Perhaps he does not notice the difference, or perhaps his tact is so divine and beautiful that he does notice the differ-

ence and says nothing. In appearance he has grown larger, stouter, and redder—in fact, has become so fine-looking. 'I dare say you remember, cook,' says the mother to that elderly domestic, 'what a beautiful baby he was!—such a dear sturdy little fellow! I must confess I should have been a little disappointed if he had grown up pale and puny and weakly-looking, as one sees so many young men nowadays.'

In this contingency cook would have been disappointed also. Now Jane says Mr. Dick is too red-like for her, but cook always did hold with a good fresh colour. Cook has a good fresh colour herself—not unlike Mr. Dick's, in fact, only plebeian, of course, very plebeian.

Mr. Bloomsbury is anxious to know what books Dick has been studying; but, naturally, after a hard term's work, the Penny does not wish to be very communicative on the subject.

'Oh! Herodotus, and Livy, and all those chaps,' he says, in a voice which might sound to persons who do not know his idiosyncrasies a trifle surly.

Papa stretches up, with great inconvenience to himself, for the Livy. He cuts the leaves with a sort of reverence. He cannot read a word of it himself. Education was not so much thought of

in his day. But it's a fine thing, my boy, a fine thing, and I wish I had had your advantages. The Penny expresses a wish that the advantages may be blowed—only he uses a word much more emphatic than 'blowed.' Papa replaces the Livy, with the same inconvenience to himself with which he got it down, and with something which, if he had not everything to be thankful for, might almost be taken for a sigh.

In due time Dick returns to Cambridge. His bills are heavier than ever next term; they are so heavy that the mother begins to be afraid that the butler must be dull without any companion of his own sex, now that the coachman has gone. Mr. Bloomsbury therefore tells the butler that he cannot justify himself in keeping him—the situation must be such a terribly lonely one.

'Lor'! sir,' says Thomson, with a tear and a twinkle in his old eye at the same time, 'don't you be a troublin' yourself to find no reasons for givin' me notice. Thim colleges has ruined many of us afore now'—with which remark Thomson retires to the pantry and wipes his eyes on the plate-leather.

Six months later the Penny turns up at Bloomsbury Square unexpectedly, in the middle of a term

and a hansom. The very small amount of gilding with which he was gilt when he left the family mint is nearly all worn off. He looks as if he drank—only looks, of course. Many other perfectly innocent people do the same, and very awkward it is for them. He has, he says, 'come down'; this is, indeed, perfectly obvious. It presently becomes obvious that he has been compelled to 'come down.' To the old man there is a horror in the very idea of such a thing. It takes a great deal of explaining—and explaining things is Dick's *forte*—to make him feel easy again. Lots of fellows do it—it's nothing. There's Lord Noodle and the Marquis of Foolington who have—well, left with me. They *were* up to larks, if you like; but in my case it's been a most beastly swindle—that's what it is, a beastly swindle. (The Penny's language has long been noted for its richness and elegance.) Why, any of the chaps 'll tell you it's a swindle. None of the 'chaps' step forward to do this, however. Fortunately, Bloomsbury Square does not need them. Dick is believed on his own assertion—by two people only.

The Penny now thinks he would like to farm in Canada. He says very frequently that he is blowed if he can't make something out of that.

So he has a fine outfit—flannel underclothing sewed with tears, love, and devotion—and a fine sum of money to put into the business he has heard of out there.

After he has gone—only just after—Cambridge bills and, alas! promissory notes of very extensive promise indeed begin to come in to Bloomsbury Square; and when they once begin it is a long time before they stop. It is about this period that the mother discovers that the air of Bloomsbury is very relaxing—is not sure, indeed, that it is a *wholesome* place to live in; hears that many doctors consider the neighbourhood of Peckham excellent for the rheumatism from which she suffers—when convenient. And then this house is so large. Two old people like you and me feel quite lost in a wilderness of a place like this. Now, in a dear comfortable little box—— So they go to a dear comfortable little box in the refreshing neighbourhood of Albert Road, Peckham—just cook and themselves—so nice and homely. But the old man can look the world in the face. Dick's Cambridge expenses—he speaks of them thus—have been quite comfortably settled.

Dick does not write very often—indeed, has not written at all. He is busy with his farm. Farm-

ing is a very fine thing for young men; an active, open-air life makes something better of a young fellow than your stuffy offices and your ledgers and your account books. 'Make your boy a farmer, sir, as I have made mine.'

And the farmer turns up in a year at Albert Road, Peckham, in a condition which the brother-in-law, full of uncharitableness, characterises as disgraceful. The Penny looks more as if he drank than ever—which is unfortunate, but of course unavoidable. He is ill-dressed; he is more surly in manner. If he were not her son—her only son—the mother, who has gentle blood in her perhaps, and that refinement which comes of a pure mind and a tender heart, might shudder to touch anything so coarse and unclean. But she kisses and cries over him like a fool, before she has heard his story, which may be forgiven her, and afterwards, which cannot. The farm was a beastly swindle, of course; the money which was sunk in it was lost, equally of course; but if his father can get him—say some post of responsibility in a bank, or something like that—he is blowed (again) if he doesn't make a success. He is also blowed when his father tells him something—not all, not half, for fear of hurting his feelings—of his Cambridge debts. He is of

opinion his father has been swindled; a beastly swindle, indeed, as usual. His father looks in the fire meditatively. He says nothing; there is, in fact, nothing to be said. The Penny thinks that, upon his soul, you've got wretched diggings here. The father says quietly they are the best he can now afford. It is his only reproach, and that does not penetrate the target, the target being remarkably thick, tough, and invulnerable.

The position of trust is, through influence, procured. For three weeks Albert Road, Peckham, is supremely happy. Everything is going on so well. And then a story is whispered in the father's ear which, if it gets abroad, means Dick's ruin. It is not a pretty story. The mother does not know it. It is not kept from her so much because it would wound her, for she would not believe it, but because it is not fit, as a story, for her hearing. The old man denies it furiously. His son! Dick! It is proved to him beyond reasonable doubt; and he denies it again, like Peter, with an oath. The evidence is damning; and he turns and damns his informant. The scandal is, however, hushed up. Dick mentions it in a note to his father. It was another fellow with an unfortunate resemblance to himself. An old story; but not so old that the

father will not believe it from the lips of the son. After this Dick's letters come fairly regularly; such nice letters—not, perhaps, very educated in style or very correct in spelling, nor even very filial in expression; but all saying the same thing, that he is getting on famously, and asking for the loan of five or ten pounds in the postscript. The mother thinks that Dick has really found his vocation. As the weeks go by she becomes sure of it; gets more sure, and feels sometimes a little angry that her husband is so quiet, moody, and unresponsive. He does not believe that ugly story. God help him! no, but it haunts him; or perhaps the shadow of an evil to come hangs over him. He looks back on this time, long after, wondering which it was, and cannot determine.

Then Dick turns up again—at night this time, and without a bluster. He looks sober; and looks, too, as if he were haunted by a ghost. It is the old story, but with a new and engaging sequel. Everything a beastly swindle, as usual. The manager a cad, and Dick accused of forgery. The mother goes white to her lips, then a flaming scarlet. Her boy accused of that! Her boy—the soul of honour! The soul of honour has something in his appearance to-night suggestive of a cur expecting a

whipping. This appearance is not lessened when he says that he must get out of this damned country before to-morrow.

'Get out of the country!' shouts the old man, with a heavy fist on the table which makes the glasses ring. 'My God! if you're an honest man you shall face the world and give it the lie.'

The son falls back a little, scared at his father's gleaming eyes and ashen face; and the mother, in that old, fond, foolish way, puts her arms round her boy and says he must fight it out because it will all come right. God takes care of such things; and the guilty are found out and punished.

'*That's it,*' says her boy, thrusting her away; '*that is why I'm going!*'

The Penny does not turn up any more—at least, not in England. It is to be presumed that abroad he turns up pretty constantly anywhere where there is foolishness and money.

Albert Road, Peckham, has its tragedy, though it will be allowed that the locality is sordid rather than tragic. His son-in-law thinks that his misfortunes have made the old man very much more of a gentleman than he used to be. Very likely it is true. Misfortunes often have a refining effect. The self-satisfaction of respectability must be con-

siderably damped when one reflects that one is the father of a forger. The pride and pomposity of Bloomsbury must be extinguished for ever when one knows of one's son that forgery is not the most dishonourable of his failings. As for the mother, when her belief in her boy went, so went hope also. Father and mother have both been fools, but she has been the greater fool of the two. Both, everyone says so, have done their best to ruin the boy—have ruined him. They might have seen what he was years before, but they shut their eyes. They might have learnt from their friends, long ago, that he was a scamp, but they would not hear. It is very sad for them, of course, and everyone has the very greatest sympathy with them; but it is their own fault—entirely their own fault. It may be; but if it is, then surely the tragedies we make for ourselves are grimmer than any which fate makes for us.

## *THE SPINSTER*

'Il arrive quelquefois des accidents dans la vie d'où il faut être un peu fou pour se bien tirer'

She enjoys a limited income, invested for her by an officious relative in a Dock Company. The income is very limited, and the Spinster spends quite half of it in journeys to and from town to look and see how the bonds are getting on in a Safe Deposit.

She lives with her cousins. Their generosity is most beautiful. Quite an example to mankind. She pays them Nothing, absolutely Nothing. Generosity, in the feminine, always mentions this, quite casually, when she pays calls.

'John and I are delighted to be able to give her a home,' she says.

The stress upon the 'give' is so slight that it might almost be absent altogether. Tabitha does nothing in return for this superhuman kindness. That is, almost nothing. Full of tact and thought-

The Eldest Generosity girl bounces about a good deal on the music stool and plays wrong notes maliciously

fulness, indeed, Generosity allows her to do a few little things about the house, that she may not feel so much under an obligation to dear John. Tabitha is not at all accomplished. She belongs to a period when a smattering of Italian, a knowledge of the use of the globes, and a running spidery handwriting declared a young lady educated. But Generosity overlooks her deficiencies and kindly allows her to help the children with their lessons and superintend their practising. The eldest Generosity girl bounces about a good deal on the music-stool and plays wrong notes maliciously. She doesn't really think, she says, that it's the least use Tab hearing her practise. Tab has not an atom of style. Which is very true; Tab's only recommendation being an infinite store of patience and sweet temper. The Eldest further complains of Tab that she is so awfully prim The Eldest suffers a good deal from this primness, and is infinitely to be pitied. How annoying it is to know, for instance, that Tab takes two hours getting up every morning, and adheres to an hour's hair-brushing every night as if it were a religion! Generosity herself never heard anything so ludicrous as the way in which Tab clings to the traditions of her youth. Because at Cheltenham

—Tab's papa was an effete old General—breakfast was at half-past eight and the family put on their clean clothing on Sunday, Tab can scarcely believe in the morality of persons breakfasting at nine and donning clean garments on Saturday. She does not indeed express these outrageous opinions, Generosity having given her to understand that she cannot air her ridiculous notions there.

Her bedroom is a perfect portrait gallery of ancestors. She keeps an especial silk pocket-handkerchief to dust them with, which is used for no other purpose. The Eldest says she never saw anything so hideous as the old things, and would like to know why people's ancestors always have great beaks of noses like that; the Eldest's own nose being an engaging little snub. Tab's family are like the nightly hair-brushing to her—a religion. No matter how disagreeable or how impecunious, alive or dead, provided they are relatives Tab is ready to take them to her heart. When the ne'er-do-weels are shipped off in despair by their friends to Buenos Ayres or California, she writes them long letters full of affection—and enclosing a Post-office Order. It is thought that the relatives do not always read the letters. But

there is no occasion on record on which they have not taken kindly to the Order.

Generosity, with the highest of motives, of course, does her best to shake Tab's belief in her family.

Generosity says, 'Isn't it absurd to see how proud the Joneses are of their uncle because he is a General? *Any* one can be a General. Isn't it ridiculous, Tab?'

A little colour rises in Tab's worn face. It is to be feared that she is afraid of Generosity's back-handed little stabs, and has not the courage to make a spirited reply. She says feebly, 'Oh, very!'

But her heart is as true as steel to that effete old papa.

Generosity is extremely kind to Tab, of course. Tab has all her meals with the family. And it is by the merest chance that the legs of chickens and the jamless tarts always fall to her share. Tab herself always prefers the unpopular pudding. Tab is lamentably weak.

She goes errands for Generosity twenty times perhaps in an afternoon. Generosity's maligners say she invents the errands to annoy Tab. But even if that were true—which of course it is not—

Generosity's aim is not attained. At the twentieth errand there is a little more colour than usual in Tab's face. But that is all. And that may easily come from the exercise she has taken. Generosity always prefaces her requests with 'As you have nothing to do, Tab.'

And Tab, of course, really has nothing to do. Only the little things about the house to which other people are superior, or can't waste their time over, or find, by reason of their higher intelligence and education, too much bother.

Someone once said Tab was a maid-of-all-work without wages. But that must have been someone who knew nothing of the immense kindnesses she receives from Generosity and John. Generosity, certainly, often reminds Tab, in a perfectly indirect and ladylike manner, how fortunate she is.

'I hear,' she says, 'the Mortons are going to have a cousin to live with them. Of course she is to pay—two pounds a week, I believe. Very kind of them to have her even on those terms, don't you think? I believe someone suggested not letting her pay anything. But, as Mr. Morton says, that would be Quixotic generosity indeed.'

Tab says, 'Yes, indeed,' meekly.

Her intelligence is not of a high order. Perhaps she does not apply these stories as she ought. But Generosity, thoughtful as ever, takes Tab's want of sharpness into consideration, and generally makes her meaning perfectly clear.

If Tab had any proper pride she would go. But she does not go. Perhaps she can't afford the luxury of proper pride. Her dividends from the Dock Company are ridiculously small. Perhaps, also, with a divine charity and an exquisite foolishness, she believes that Generosity does not mean to be unkind. She bears, therefore, with an utter tameness and want of spirit, the thousand little daily insults which her benefactress heaps on her. It is possible that if she rose and fought Generosity that lady might like her and treat her better. But Tab's is the creed of meekness, forbearance, and gentleness. And she goes on toiling for the children, nursing them when they are ill, and doing odd jobs for Generosity with a patience and good temper wholly reprehensible. One day comes the news that the Dock Company has stopped payment.

'All the sensible shareholders,' says Generosity, a trifle pointedly perhaps, 'will, of course, get some of their money back. But people who are

so wealthy that they can sit at home and do nothing to recover it will, I suppose, be swindled.'

Tab is understood to say that the Company must already be in great trouble, and she could not bear to give them extra worry on her account.

'My dear Tab,' says Generosity, with considerable sharpness, 'how can you be so excessively idiotic?'

There is, alas! much truth in Generosity's unvarnished words. Tab is a perfect godsend to all the swindling persons and companies she encounters. She believes what they say, and follows their advice with a certain obstinacy which is vastly irritating. She is, therefore, reduced through the Dock Company to an annual income of twelve pounds. And when she receives that it is with fear and trembling, lest she has taken from the poor creatures what they can ill afford to pay her.

About this time the Eldest comes out. She is not especially pretty. But she is audacious, which perhaps does just as well. Generosity is very fond of her, of course. Cannot bear the idea of ever being separated from her—equally of course. But, knowing that a girl is happier married, with beautiful self-sacrifice Generosity sets about accom-

plishing this desirable end. Papa brings people home to dinner. Papa always enjoyed the society of young men. Once he brings home a veteran from the War Office. The veteran is not less than fifty. Still, he is a wonderfully young-looking man; and, quite casually of course, at an afternoon call Generosity finds out from a friend that he is really very comfortably off. By the merest chance, when he dines with them, the Eldest has on her prettiest dress and her most astounding manners.

The War Office looks at her attentively through his eyeglass. He has not seen much of feminine society lately. In his young days—though he is, of course, by no means *old*—feminine society was perhaps less obtrusive. There can be no doubt, from the way he studies the Eldest, that he is immensely captivated by her frankness, dash, and originality.

Tab is even quieter than usual during his visits. When he addresses her she is fluttered and agitated, and answers him with much perturbation, and, it is to be feared, not much sense.

He addresses her, Generosity thinks, unnecessarily often. Perhaps he thinks she is a visitor;

or perhaps that she pays. So Generosity mentions with the greatest possible delicacy of expression, and, as usual, quite casually, that dear Tab is perfectly dependent upon us. The War Office puts up his eyeglass and looks at Generosity a little fixedly.

'Poor thing!' he says; 'poor thing!'

Generosity can't quite understand his tone. But after all, it is not worth troubling about.

One evening Generosity comes to Tab's bedroom to have a chat with her. She is quite condescending and good-tempered and pleasant.

'We shall have to part from dear Bertha soon, I fear,' she says.

Tab says 'Why?' in an odd voice.

'Why!' echoes Generosity impatiently; 'I should have thought even you would have seen how devoted he is to her.'

Tab says 'Yes,' feebly, and does not raise her foolish old face.

'I am perfectly *certain* of it,' continues Generosity.

Tab bends a little lower over her fine darning, and says nothing.

And Generosity, aggravated at her unresponsiveness, observes, 'And very glad I am of it. I

always consider to be unmarried is in some degree a slur upon a woman's character.'

With this Parthian shot she retires.

While Tab is singing that night in a ridiculous old voice, which always breaks on the top notes, the War Office bends to turn a page and says something to her through the song. After that Tab's quavers and trills are more ridiculous than ever; and when she takes down her music her primly mittened hand shakes like a leaf. Generosity is particularly caustic that evening, and Tab's answers are wider of the mark than usual; so much so that the Eldest says to the War Office that she really believes Tab is in love with someone. She has been so truly idiotic lately; so frightfully sentimental, you know.

The War Office says 'Indeed!' and looks at the Eldest through his eyeglass, as usual, in a sort of mild surprise.

That evening he has an interview with Generosity and John. Generosity's surprise is not mild, nor her indignation; and she is constrained to tell Tab that she has behaved like a viper.

The War Office and Tab are believed to be supremely happy; so frightfully sentimental, you know. Generosity after a time consents to visit

them. As they have a delightful house for the girls to stay in, and see a great deal of nice society (masculine), she makes herself very affable and affectionate. The War Office is occasionally a little rude to her, and continues to stare at her through his eyeglass in an extraordinary manner; but Tab, full of gratitude for all the kindness she has received, is boundlessly tender, loving, and kind.

But then Tab was always a fool.

## *THE NEW WOMAN*

'L'esprit de la plupart des femmes sert plus à fortifier leur folie que leur raison'

She is young, of course. She looks older than she really is. And she calls herself a woman. Her mother is content to be called a lady, and is naturally of small account. Novissima's chief characteristic is her unbounded self-satisfaction.

She dresses simply in close-fitting garments, technically known as tailor-made. She wears her elbows well away from her side. It has been hinted that this habit serves to diminish the apparent size of the waist. This may be so. Men do not always understand such things. It certainly adds to a somewhat aggressive air of independence which finds its birth in the length of her stride. Novissima strides in (from the hip) where men and angels fear to tread.

In the evening simplicity again marks her dress. Always close-fitting—always manly and

wholly simple. Very little jewellery, and close-fitting hair. Which description is perhaps not technical. Her hands are steady and somewhat *en évidence*. Her attitudes are strong and independent, indicative of a self-reliant spirit.

With mild young men she is apt to be crushing. She directs her conversation and her glance above their heads. She has a way of throwing scraps of talk to them—crumbs from a well-stored intellectual table—in return for their mild platitudes.

'Pictures—no, I do not care about pictures,' she says. 'They are all so pretty nowadays.'

She has a way of talking of noted men by their surnames *tout court*, indicative of a familiarity with them not enjoyed by her hearer. She has a certain number of celebrities whom she marks out for special distinction—obscurity being usually one of their merits.

Prettiness is one of her pet aversions. Novissima is, by the way, not pretty herself. She is white. Pink girls call her sallow. She has a long face, with a discontented mouth, and a nose indicative of intelligence, and too large for feminine beauty as understood by men. Her equanimity, like her complexion, is unassailable. One cannot make her blush. It is the other way round.

In conversation she criticises men and books freely. The military man is the object of her deepest scorn. His intellect, she tells one, is terribly restricted. He never reads—Reads, that is, with a capital. For curates she has a sneaking fondness—a feminine weakness too deeply ingrained to be stamped out in one generation of advancement.

Literary men she tolerates. They have probably read some of the books selected out of the ruck for her approval. But even to these she talks with an air suggestive of the fact that she could tell them a thing or two if she took the trouble. Which no doubt she could.

Novissima's mother is wholly and meekly under Novissima's steady thumb. That respectable lady's attitude is best described as speechless. If she opens her mouth, Novissima closes it for her with a tolerant laugh or a reference to some fictional character with whom the elder lady is fortunately unacquainted.

'Oh, Mother!' she will say, if that relative is mentioned. 'Yes; but she is hopelessly behind the times, you know.'

That settles Novissima's mother. As for her father—a pleasant, square-built man, who is a little

deaf—he is not either of much account. Novissima is kind to him as to an animal ignorant of its own strength, requiring management. She describes him as prim, and takes good care, in her jaunty way, that no deleterious fiction comes beneath his gaze.

'He would not understand it, poor old thing!' she explains.

And she is quite right.

Young Calamus, the critic, has had a better education than Novissima's father. He knows half a dozen countries, their language and their literature. And *he* does not understand Novissima's fiction.

The world is apt to take Novissima at her own valuation. When she makes a statement—and statements are her strong point—half the people in the room know better, but make the mistake of believing that they must be wrong because she is so positive. The other half know better also, but are too wise or too lazy to argue.

While on a visit at a great country house Novissima meets young Calamus, of whom she has spoken with an off-hand familiarity for years. The genial hostess, who knows Novissima's stand-point, sends young Calamus down to dinner with her. He

is clever enough for anybody, reflects my lady. And Novissima, who is delighted, is more than usually off-hand for the sake of his vanity. Calamus, as it happens, is perfectly indifferent as to what she may be thinking of him.

He is good-natured, and entirely free from self-consciousness. He is the real thing, and not the young man who is going to do something some day. He has begun doing it already. And there is a look in his keen, fair face which suggests that he intends going on.

Novissima's alertness of mind attracts him. Being a man, he is not above the influence of a trim figure and a pair of dark eyes. This is a study, and an entirely pleasant one, for Calamus is about to begin a new novel. He thinks that Novissima will do well for a side character, which is precisely that for which she serves in daily life. She is not like the rest. But it is the rest that men fall in love with and marry.

Novissima has for the moment forced herself to the front of the stage; but in a few years she will only be a side character. Calamus knows this. He remembers the grim verdict of Dr. Kudos, his junior dean at Cambridge.

'Modern young woman! Yes; interesting

development of cheap education; but she proves nothing.'

Which is the worst of science. It looks upon us all as specimens, and expects us to prove something.

Novissima is pleased to approve of my lady's judgment in sending her down to dinner with Calamus. She feels that the other girls are a long way below his mental level—that they are wholly unfitted to manufacture conversation of a quality calculated to suit his literary taste.

Calamus happens to be rather a simple-minded young man. He has been everywhere. He has seen most things, and nothing seems to have touched a certain strong purity of thought which he probably acquired in the nursery. Men are thus. They carry heavier moral armour. Outward things affect them little. Novissima, on the other hand, is a little the worse for her reading.

She thinks she knows the style of talk that will suit him, and she is apparently wrong. For Calamus stares about him with speculative grey eyes. His replies are wholly commonplace and somewhat frivolous. Novissima is intensely earnest, and, in her desire to show him the depth of her knowledge, is not always discreet.

She talks of the future of women, of coming generations and woman's influence thereon.

'They had better busy themselves with the beginning of the future generation,' says Calamus, in his half-listening way.

'How do you mean?'

'Children,' explains Calamus in a single word.

Novissima mentions the name of one or two foreign authors not usually discussed in polite society in their own country, and Calamus frowns. She approaches one or two topics which he refuses to talk about with a simple bluntness.

He is hungry, having been among the turnips all day. He has no intention of treating Novissima to any of those delightfully original ideas which he sells to a foolish public at so much a line.

During the whole visit Novissima and Calamus are considerably thrown together. Gossips say that she runs after him. He is superficially shallow, and refuses to be deep. She is superficially deep, and betrays her shallowness at every turn. He remembers Dr. Kudos, and makes himself very agreeable. She is only a side character. She proves nothing.

Then Calamus packs up his bag and goes back to town. There he presently marries Edith, accord-

ing to a long-standing arrangement kept strictly to themselves.

Novissima is rather shocked. She feels, and says, that it is a pity. Edith is a tall girl with motherly eyes and a clear laugh. She has no notion how clever Calamus is, and would probably care as much for him if he were a fool.

Novissima says that Mr. Calamus has simply thrown away his chance of becoming a great man. She says it, moreover, with all her customary assurance, from the high stand-point of critical disapproval that is hers. And Calamus proceeds to turn out the best work of his lifetime, while Edith busies herself with mere household matters, and laughs her clear laugh over a cradle.

There is something wrong somewhere. It cannot, of course, be Novissima, for she is so perfectly sure of herself. Possibly it is Calamus who is wrong. But he is quite happy, and Edith is the same.

It is only Novissima who is not content. Dr. Kudos was right. She proves nothing. She has tried to prove that woman's mission is something higher than the bearing of children and bringing them up. And she has failed.

Yet when Mary mentions his name . . . he turns upon her furiously

## *THE FARMER*

'Quand l'homme commence à raisonner il cesse de sentir'

He lives and has lived all his life, as his fathers before him, in an old farmhouse beautiful with rare carvings, substantial, comfortable and honest.

The Farmer is himself substantial, honest, and hot-tempered. 'A peppery old chap, you know,' says his son, with a filial candour quite modern and disrespectful.

The Farmer indeed justifies such a description to perfection.

There is perhaps no more soft-hearted, impetuous, obstinate, wrong-headed old fellow in the county.

He has been in the habit of swearing all his life quite freely at everybody. At his son, for his fine gentlemanly airs and his fine gentlemanly appearance. At his wife, who is blue-eyed and somewhat overpowered by a perfectly good-tempered stoutness. At his servants. At his farm-labourers.

'Lor'! he do cus, bless 'im!' says one of them. Perhaps the other people who have to deal with him regard him in a like tolerant spirit. His wife, for instance, who has been brought up piously in a Dissenting book shop in the county town, accepts his failings with a fat, simple kindness. 'They speak harsh to you,' she says, embracing the whole sex in the description. 'And they like their glass, and there's no pleasing 'em with their meals, but I dunno that we'd have 'em different if we could.'

The two are married as very young people in that unpractical age when it seems better to be poor together than to be rich apart. Mary is very ill soon afterwards—an illness which she bears with the simple patience and sweetness which are indeed still characteristic of her when she has long ceased to be slim and girlish. The fidelity and devotion with which her husband, who is a fine, vigorous young fellow in those days, nurses her is still on record. It is remembered how, when their little daughter is born to them—dead—he puts down his honest impetuous head on the pillow by Mary and cries like a child. Though a son comes to them a few years later, the little girl who never saw the light is still beloved and unforgotten; and when the chapter wherein David loses his child is

read in church, the Farmer's eyes are so dim that he cannot see.

He is believed to be all his life under the illusion that Mary still wears her girlish charms. Though he speaks to her often roughly himself, he is ready to defend her a great deal more roughly, if need be, against all the world. When the well-bred son suggests, without indeed intending to offend the 'peppery old chap' the least in the world, that it would be more convenient if my mother were slim and active enough to look after the pigs and chickens herself, the 'peppery old chap' turns on his son with his honest old face quite savage and apoplectic. 'Darn you,' he says, 'and darn the pigs and chickens too, afore I'd have a whipping-post of a wife like yours.' And the gentlemanly Jack turns his back upon his father's ill-bred wrath and retires, humming an air with a great deal of nonchalance and a smile.

With his farm people old John is particularly hasty and kind. They understand his ways perfectly perhaps. 'He do cus, bless 'im,' when the cottages want repairing, but he repairs them not the less. He loses his hot old temper to a degree quite alarming when they neglect their duty. But he never turns them off with a sarcastic

urbanity, as does his brother farmer in the next parish.

He is perhaps worse served and more beloved than any agriculturist in the district. When times are bad the people come to him readily enough for relief, and, though he gives them plenty of grumbling and strong language, these are never the only memories of him they carry away.

John is people's churchwarden. He is not perhaps entirely successful in this capacity. A person whose mildest conversation is interlarded, quite unconsciously and from long habit, with uncommonly expressive flowers of speech, must be allowed to have his drawbacks as an officer of religion. Upon matters of Church doctrine, moreover, the farmer is as ignorant, as obstinate, as conservative, and as pig-headed as any man in the kingdom. A place of worship mouldy, moth-eaten, and principally ornamented with a huge three-decker pulpit, was good enough for his fathers, and he would like to know, with an ominous red coming into his honest old face, why it shouldn't be good enough for him? When the parson, who indeed is not injudicious, and has a very kindly liking and respect for his hot-headed parishioner, first preaches in a surplice, John disseminates awful reports in

the parish in which the Scarlet Lady and the Pope of Rome figure largely. He absents himself from church for a Sunday or two. But he finds that he gets on very badly without what he calls his 'religion,' and comes back pretty soon to the seat which he has occupied every Sunday since he was a child. He continues, it is true, to sniff at the parson's Romish abominations, but he says his prayers in a fine, fervent old voice, and with his rough face very pious and absorbed.

The great love of the old man's life is the gentlemanly Jack. At a time when money was a great deal scarcer with him than it is now he gave Jack an excellent education. The result of that education is not perhaps unprecedented. The slow, old-fashioned ways of his father are not quite good enough for the *fin-de-siècle* son. Jack is indeed fond of the 'old chap' in a slightly condescending manner, and the father is devoted with all the passion of his hot, faithful heart to the boy to whom he can scarcely talk for an hour without quarrelling. There are a thousand subjects of dispute between the two. There is Jack's wife, the genteel whipping-post brought up in black silk in a fashionable milliner's in London. There is a certain easy, bored, indolent air the son has

with him, vastly irritating. There is his confounded fiddle-faddle taste for literature, which has been known to lead him to lie full length on the parlour sofa on a Sunday morning, smoking perpetual pipes and reading 'East Lynne.'

There is his desire—curse him—to introduce the steam plough and other new-fangled arrangements into the sleepy, tranquil, behind-the-times old farm, and his appearance on high days and holidays in a suit of clothes fit for a gentleman, and a pair of the finest, dandy, most exasperating patent leather boots.

Mary, the fat, tranquil Mary, tries her best to keep the peace between the two.

'I'm sorry to annoy my father,' says Jack; 'but he's so deuced peppery, you know.'

Is he? Perhaps. Mary at least acquiesces, or seems to acquiesce, in the dictum with a stout sigh. Yet he has been good to her—very good—very faithful, devoted and honest. He has the tenderest heart and bravest spirit, she thinks, of any man in the world. Perhaps, like a true woman, she loves him none the less because he often gives her pain.

The cause of the quarrel which parts the father and son for ever is not precisely known.

Perhaps it rises in Jack's patent leather boots; in the steam plough, or his desecration of the Sabbath. It is at least certain that the old man is the more in the wrong. He loses his hot old temper from the first. He turns and curses the boy whom he loves from the depth of his honest heart, and reproaches him in bitter words which can never be forgotten.

Jack is self-possessed enough. The superior education he has received enables him to control his feelings pretty easily while the infuriated old man, with his face aflame, is shouting at him across the table.

'Curse you!' says the Farmer breathlessly. 'And curse me if I ever see your face again!'

'As you like, sir,' replies the gentlemanly Jack, cool, urbane, and courteous to the last. And he turns on his heel and leaves his father alone.

The two do not meet for many years. Until Jack goes away the Farmer has never known, perhaps, how dear the boy has been to him.

Yet when Mary mentions his name, and lays her plump hand with the worn wedding ring on it pleadingly on her husband's arm, he turns upon her furiously, and bids her be quiet with an oath.

He has loved the boy too well to forgive him easily.

One day the news comes that Jack has a little son of his own.

'You'll let bygones be bygones now, won't you, my dear?' says Mary. She has a great want to take that baby in her warm, motherly arms, to renew the feelings with which she bent over her own son, little, innocent, and good. And the Farmer says 'No' in a great voice. And Mary dares ask no more.

The trouble preys on her health at last.

She dies very quietly one night in her sleep. The old man's agony of grief at her going is terrible to see. Now she has left him he is quite alone.

He is so far softened by her death that in the early days of his grief he makes a resolution concerning the boy. He puts off its fulfilment indeed for many weeks. And at last, before he has carried it into action, is taken ill himself.

He has kindly people about him. The parson and the parson's gentle wife come every day to see him. A portly milkmaid, of indefinite age, who has been in his service since she was sixteen, and

hopes to die in his service, a milkmaid still, nurses him faithfully.

'He's got summut on his mind,' she says to the Doctor. 'He's that restless as he's been hay-making with the bed-clothes all night. Maybe when he can speak he'll tell us what it is.'

He recovers his speech in a day or two, but he makes no further use of it than to say, in a wearisome repetition, one word—the name of his son. They are not sure if he is wholly sensible. He takes the food and medicine they give him with a meekness foreign to his character. But he says nothing except Jack, Jack, Jack, over and over again, and in a heart-rending voice.

Through a moaning and troublesome night he asks for the boy repeatedly. Through the hot August day—in the sultry afternoon. He wakes at last from an uneasy sleep to see his son sitting quietly by his side. 'Why, Jacky!' says the Farmer, with a sudden cry of joy, 'I'm darned if I haven't been dreaming that we had a quarrel, and I sent you away. That was a rare mistake to make, Jacky, wasn't it?'

'A rare mistake,' says gentleman Jack in a deep voice.

John lies quietly after this for many hours.

His brave old face, tanned with the broad winds of heaven, is scarcely, even now, like the face of a dying man. He fancies that Mary is downstairs minding the grandson he has never seen. 'She's so fond of the childer, is the old woman,' he says.

Towards night, while Jack is still sitting by his side in the darkening room, a drowsiness falls on him. But there is, or seems to be, some uneasiness in his mind which will not let him sleep.

'It's the dream, Jacky,' he says in a troubled voice. 'Some one—the old fool, God bless her, who waits on me—said that it was true.'

'There is nothing true,' answers gentleman Jack huskily, 'except that we've been—deuced fond of each other all the time.'

And the Farmer passes from a sleep in which all the dreams are tranquil to that sleep in which there are none.

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